LIGHT, MORE LIGHT WHILE TIME SHALL LAST.....
TILL SHADOW VANISH IN THE LIGHT OF
LIGHTS.—Tennyson
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No

With Christmas Greetings
to classmate. Reid
A. C. D.
1901

BIBLE CHARACTERS

An account of the world in this one single view as God's world.
—Butler.

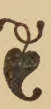
BIBLE CHARACTERS

ADAM TO ACHAN

BY

ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF 'BUNYAN CHARACTERS,'
'LANCELOT ANDREWES AND HIS
PRIVATE DEVOTIONS,'
ETC. ETC.



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BIBLE CHARACTERS

I

ADAM

LET US MAKE MAN
IN OUR IMAGE

IN the wise and good providence of Almighty God a new and an entrancing light has been cast in our day on the origin of the earth and on the early ages of mankind. A noble succession of ministers and interpreters of nature has been raised up in these later generations who, by the labours they have undertaken, and by the methods they have followed, have been enabled to make discoveries that had not entered the mind of man to imagine in former ages. Up till our day far more was known about the way and process of our redemption than about the way and process of our creation. But it will be in the complete and harmonious combination of these two kinds of knowledge, divine revelation and human science, that we shall come to a perfect man, in which the whole body of knowledge and faith and love shall be fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.

Magnificent as have been the services of such men as Herschel, and Faraday, and Lyell, and Darwin, and Spencer, at the same time their magnificent services have lain far more in the regions of matter and motion than in the mind and the heart of man. It is enough for any man, or for any school of men, to be enabled to take us back to the first beginnings of this present system of things, when as yet our earth was without form and void, and to lead us up step after step, age after age, till we open our eyes on this wonderful world as it now is. To one of His servants God gives the talents of revelation and inspiration, and to another the talents of observation, and experiment, and discovery, and the exposition of discovery—to each one of His servants separately as He will. And to each several steward and servant of His, according to his faithfulness to the talents committed to him, his Master at His coming will say, 'Well done!' And it is surely a kind of forecast and foretaste of that 'Well done!'—the warm exclamation of wonder and of worship that rises out of our enlarged minds and exalted hearts as we lay down *The Outlines of Astronomy*, *The Principles of Geology*, *The Origin of Species*, *The First Principles*, and such-like books. At the same time, at their best, those ministers and interpreters of nature do not satisfy their readers. Even in their own rich and well-worked fields they do not satisfy all their readers. Even after they have led us so far up on the shining path of scientific truth, we feel sure that there are still sources and paths and fields of light, as well as

shadows and belts and whole worlds of darkness, over which we have been hurried, and into which we have not been led or let look. We feel not unlike that famous philosopher of our day who divined that there must surely be a serious disturbance somewhere in the order and stability of the solar system that no astronomy had as yet discovered, acknowledged, or attempted to account for. As we are carried away by the spell of the great writers on evolution, we feel all the time that, after all has been told, there is still something unrecognised and undescribed from which we suffer the most disturbing and injurious influences. All the time we feel in ourselves a backward, sideward, downward, perverse pull under which we reel and stagger continually; it is an experience that makes us wiser than all our teachers in some of the most obscure, but at the same time some of the most certain matters of mankind and their spiritual history. Speaking for myself, as I read the great books of our modern scientific men with a delight and an advantage I cannot put enough words upon, I always miss in them—in them all, and in the best of them all—a matter of more importance to me than all else that they tell me. For, all the time I am reading their fascinating discoveries and speculations, I still feel in myself a disturbance, a disorder, a disharmony, and a positive dislocation from the moral, and even from the material, order of the universe around me and above me: a disorder and a dislocation that my scientific teachers neither acknowledge nor leave room for its acknowledgment or redress. That is

magnificent! That is noble! That is divine! I exclaim as I read. But when I come to the end of my reading—Is that all? I ask. I am compelled by all my experience and all my observation to ask, Is that all? Is that your very last word to me? Then, if that is all, I must still go in search of a philosophy of nature and of man that understands me, and accounts for me, and has, if so be, a more comprehensive, a more scientific, a more profound, and a more consoling message to me. In one word, and to speak out the whole of my disappointment and complaint in one word, What about SIN? What is SIN? When and where did SIN enter in the evolution of the human race and seize in this deadly way on the human heart? Why do you all so avoid and shut your eyes to SIN? And, still more, what about JESUS CHRIST? Why do I find nothing in your best text-books about HIM who was WITHOUT SIN? About Him who is more to me, and to so many more of your best readers, than all Nature, and all her suns, and systems, and laws, and processes put together? Far more. For He has carried both our understanding and our imagination and our heart so absolutely captive that we cannot read with our whole heart the best book you have written because His name is not in it. WHO and WHAT is HE, we insist, who has leapt at a bound above all law and all order of matter and of mind, and of cosmic and ethic evolution, and has taken His stand of holiness at the head of the human race? Schools of science, schools of morals, schools of philosophy, ministers and interpreters of nature

and of man, what is SIN? and what think ye of CHRIST?

Bishop Butler has taught us, and that with an impressiveness we can never forget, that knowledge at its best is not our proper happiness. With all his immense weight Butler has impressed upon us that our proper province is virtue and religion, life and manners; the science of improving the temper and making the heart better. This is the field assigned us to cultivate, he exclaims, and how much it has lain neglected is indeed astonishing! And thus it is that Moses, so to call him, with two or three splendid strokes, passes over all that which so fascinates and absorbs our modern men of science, and takes up mankind at that point when they have the image and likeness of God completely and perfectly stamped upon them. Nor does Moses delay long, even upon that, but, after one great and fruitful word upon that, he passes on to take up at more length, in his own wonderful way, and in answerable style, the temptation and the fall of Adam and of all Adam's offspring. 'The Scripture begins,' says Butler, 'with an account of God's creation of the world, in order to ascertain who He is concerning whose providences, commands, promises, and threatenings this sacred book all along treats, the Maker and Proprietor of the world, He whose creatures we are — the God of Nature. Revelation, indeed, considers the common affairs of this world, and what is going on in it, as a mere scene of distraction, and cannot be supposed to give any account of this wild scene for its own

sake. This earth, our habitation, has everywhere the appearance of being a ruin, and revelation comes in on the supposition that this world is in a ruined state.' Thus Butler. And Moses begins his priceless contribution to that revelation by telling us what, without him, would have remained a dreadful mystery to us—that is to say, he tells us how man was made upright, and how he fell from that estate wherein he was created by sinning against God. It is a fashion with the prevailing philosophy of our day to decry and contemn the old, orthodox, and fruitful argument from final causes; but I shall continue, in this matter also, to follow Bishop Butler, to me by far the deepest and the wisest philosopher the world has ever seen. Now Moses, long before Butler, is clear and sure as to the final cause of our creation. In his opening pages, Moses, after his royal manner, lets us hear the Maker of all things taking counsel with Himself concerning His end and object in the creation of man. 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' And then, from this and from many other Scriptures, we learn that the image and likeness of God is love: love, knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

Now, the multiplication and the increase of the image of God is an altogether worthy reason, adequate explanation, and final cause for the creation of this world, and for all the processes, preparations, and providences through which this world has passed. Love amply accounts for and explains and justifies it all—God's love to man, and then man's

love to God and to his neighbour. All of God's wisdom and power that was expended on this world, and on Adam its possessor and its priest, was all to find its reward and its return in a world replenished with a race of creatures who were to be such partakers of the divine nature that they would live for ever and grow for ever in the love, in the holy fellowship, in the blessed service, and in the full enjoyment of God. That was why God made man. That was why God prepared such a home for man as this world in Adam's day was, and still in our day is. The Garden of Eden in Moses, delightful as it is, is but a dim, a faded, and a colourless picture of what God had prepared for them that were to walk with Him in that garden, and were to tell Him, as they walked with Him, how much they loved Him who had planted it. But all the time, as Thomas Goodwin says, the true Garden of Eden was in the gardener's own heart. And his blessed task was set to Adam in his own heart. And what more blessed task could have been set by God to man than to till, and water, and dress, and keep, and reap his own heart for God? And that the serpent came in all his malignity and subtlety and sowed tares in that mystical garden—that should only have given God's son and servant an embraced opportunity and an occasion of all joy to show to God and to the serpent, to heaven and to hell, how much he loved and feared God for all that God had done for him. But, how it went with Adam and with Eve, and with the Garden of Eden, and with Cain and Abel their children, Moses tells us in his

sad history. And then, by the time he takes his pen in hand to tell us all this, Moses himself has been banished out of Canaan for his sin, and is waiting for death in the wilderness. And thus it is that he dips his pen in such an inkhorn of tears, and describes to us with such sympathy, and in such sad words, that aboriginal mystery of iniquity—the temptation, the fall, and the expulsion of Adam from Eden. And then Moses adds in a psalm which he indites more immediately concerning himself the well-known words: 'Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath. Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.'

In one of William Law's finest dialogues Theophilus asks his pupil Humanus how he would set about convincing a man of his fallen estate. And Humanus answers to this effect: Man is a poor, miserable, weak, vain, distressed, corrupt, depraved, selfish, self-tormenting, perishing creature. And this world is a sad mixture of false good and real evil; a widespread scene of all sorts of trials, vexations, and miseries, all arising from the frame and nature and condition both of man and the world. This is the sure and infallible proof of the fall of man. The

fall of man is not a thing to be learnt from any history whatsoever, but shows itself everywhere and every day and in every man with as much clearness as we see the sun. My first attempt, therefore, upon any man, to convince him of Adam's fall as the ground of Christ's redemption, should be an attempt to do that for him which affliction, disappointment, sickness, pain, and the approach of death have a natural tendency to do; that is, to convince him of the vanity, poverty, and misery of his life and condition in this world. I would appeal at first to nothing but his own nature and condition in this world to demonstrate this capital truth of Holy Scripture that all mankind lie in a fallen state. Humanus says that the mere approach of death is enough to bring any man to his senses. And so it is. Death is the great debater. Death does not bandy words. Death comes to us with overwhelming proofs of our fall in his hands. There is no brow-beating or perplexing of Death. Your smart replies and unanswerable arguments will not stagger Death. All your shafts are quenched like tow before the bosses of his buckler. Now, Death made his first approach to this world in that hour of Adam and Eve's first temptation. God's own fatherly and forewarning words first uttered the dreadful name of Death. O, if Adam had only believed God about sin and death! O, if he had only stopped his ears against the father of lies! O, if he could only have foretasted guilt and remorse and agony of conscience as he was led up to the tree! O, if he could only at that fatal moment

have foreseen that coming garden where the Son of God Himself lay among the dark olive-trees recoiling from sin and death in a sweat of blood! O, if he could only have seen spread out before him all the death-beds of all his children on the earth, and all the beds of their second death in hell! O Adam and Eve in Eden, and still under the tree of temptation, look before it is too late; look on through the endless ages at the unutterable woes that you are working! 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'

An Egyptian Father has said somewhere that while the four evangelists supply the wool, yet it is Paul who weaves the web. And what Paul does in this respect for Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, he does at the same time for Moses, and David, and Isaiah. Moses, indeed, supplies the history, but it is Paul, that prince of the apostles, who takes us down into the philosophy, as we say, of that history. As we go on speaking about this and that man of science, and this and that book of science and of the philosophy of science, the unlettered people who hear us are tempted to envy us our time and our talents and our books. But they need not. Really, if they knew it, they need not. For, as long as they have Moses and Paul, the Book of Genesis and the Epistle to the Romans, they need envy no man. Thomas à Kempis used to say that his idea of perfect rest and perfect happiness was 'to sit with a little book in a little nook.' Now, with these two little books of Moses and of Paul, and with another little epistle or two

of Paul's added, those who are otherwise quite unlettered men will soon become wiser men than many of their teachers. The most unlearned and ignorant man among us has sin in himself; and he has Christ, if not yet in himself also, then in his Bible, and thus in his offer; and with both sin and Christ in his heart, and with Paul on sin and on Christ in his hand, the most unlettered man is already a man of the truest and the deepest science, and a philosopher of the first water. For it is just those two men, Adam and Christ, with their sin and their righteousness, that so stumble and so throw out our evolutionists; and it is in his handling of those two men, and of that which we have of those two men alone, that Paul shows his matchless philosophic power. Those two stumbling-stones on which so many false philosophies have been ground to powder are the very foundation-stones, corner-stones, and cope-stones of Paul's immortal school and far-shining temple of truth.

In every epistle of his the apostle's immediate, supreme, and alone subject is Jesus Christ. Paul has not a moment of his time, nor a corner of his mind, nor a beat of his heart, nor a stroke of his pen for any other person, great or small, but Jesus Christ. And Paul is in the very heat and at the very heart of one of his greatest chapters on Jesus Christ, and on the atonement that we sinners of mankind have received through Jesus Christ, when, if I may say so, the very sweep and grasp of Paul's mind, the very philosophical necessity of Paul's great intellect, all compel him to go back and take

up Adam into his great argument and great gospel. The passage is one of the most profound and magnificent even in his profound and magnificent epistles. It runs thus: 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' To Paul's so comprehensive mind, so far-sweeping imagination, and so righteousness-hungry heart, Adam and Christ are the two poles upon whom this whole world of human life revolves. As the best expositor of Paul I know of anywhere says, Adam and Jesus Christ, to Paul's heaven-soaring eye, stand out before God with all other men 'hanging at their girdles.' And it is in his evolution, illustration, and enforcement of this great truth that Paul brings in, and makes so familiar to us those peculiarly Pauline and polar terms—law and grace, faith and works, condemnation and justification, enmity and peace, alienation and reconciliation, imputation and sanctification, sin and holiness, the flesh and the Spirit, eternal life and eternal death, and such-like. On all these Scripture subjects the Westminster Catechisms supply us with Paul's doctrines in a nutshell; as will again be seen and acknowledged when theology shall have recovered herself from her temporary lapse into mere Bibliography, and when Bible history shall have again become Bible doctrine and a Bible life.

And then, just as the full truth about the atonement led the apostle back from Christ to Adam, so in another epistle of his, the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of all those who have fallen asleep in Christ, leads Paul back again to Adam in this way. 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.' The 'second man' and the 'last Adam' are most happy names and most illustrious titles of Paul's bold invention for his Master, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Which glorious Man is called the Second Adam, says Theophilus, as having in His regeneration that very perfection which the first Adam had in his creation. And because He is to do all that for us by a birth of grace, which we should have had by a birth of nature from Adam, had he kept his first estate of sinless perfection.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.
O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

Now, what say you, Academicus, to all that?

II

EVE

ADAM WAS FIRST FORMED, THEN EVE

ACCORDING to Moses, and taking Moses as he has come down to us, Eve, the mother of mankind, was, so to speak, an afterthought of her Maker. And it is surely something remarkable that four of the devoutest, boldest, and most original writers that have ever lived have taken and have gone out upon the same view. The creation of this world was the work of love, for God is Love. God so loved the very thought of this world that He created it and made it the exquisitely lovely world that we read of in Moses. But love is full of afterthoughts, of new ideas, and of still better intentions and performances. And thus it is that Moses is very bold to write as if God in His growing love for this world had found out a still better way of peopling this world than the way He had at first intended—had finished, indeed, and had pronounced very good. A new kind of love; a love such as even heaven itself had never seen nor tasted anything like it; a love sweet, warm, tender, wistful, helpful, fruitful; a love full of a 'nice and subtle

happiness';—the mutual love of man and woman, —took our Maker's heart completely captive as a still better way of replenishing earth with its children than even that noble and wonderful way by which heaven had been replenished with its angels. And thus it is that Moses, in his second chapter, lets us see our Maker coming back to earth; lets us hear Him finding fault with His first work in Adam, very good as it was; and lets us watch Him re-touching His work, till He takes Eve out of Adam and gives her back to Adam a woman to be his married wife, to be an help meet for him, and to be the mother of his children. So Moses in Genesis. And then, Plato in his *Symposium* teaches his Greeks the same thing: that man cannot live alone, that love is the true and only good of man, and that the best love of earth is but a foretaste and an assurance of the love of heaven. And then, Jacob Behmen has a doctrine all his own of the origin of woman; of the sphere and the functions of sex in this life, as well as of its absence from the life to come: a doctrine to enter on which would lead us too far away from our proper work to-night. Suffice it to say that for philosophical depth, for speculative power, for imaginative suggestiveness, and for spiritual beauty there is nothing better in Moses the Hebrew Plato, or in Plato the Attic Moses, than Behmen's doctrine of Adam and Eve. Behmen's reading of Moses leads him to believe that there must have been something of the nature of a stumble, if not an actual fall, in Adam while yet he was alone in Eden. Adam, at his own and alone

creation, was pronounced to be 'very good.' There must therefore, Behmen holds, have been some sort of slip or lapse from his original righteousness and obedience and blessedness before his Maker would have said of Adam that he was now in a condition that was 'not good.' And thus it was that Eve was created to 'help' Adam to recover himself, and to establish himself in paradise, and in the favour and fellowship and service of his Maker. 'It is not good that man should be left alone. This shows us,' says Jacob Behmen's best English interpreter, 'that Adam had somehow altered his first state and had brought some beginnings of evil into it, and had made that not to be good which God at one time had seen to be very good. And, therefore, as a less evil, and to prevent a greater, God divided—ii. 21—the first perfect human nature into two parts, into a male and a female creature; and this, as you will see by-and-by, was a wonderful instance of the love and the care of God toward our new humanity. Adam was at first the total humanity in one creature, who should, in that state of perfection, have brought forth his own likeness out of himself in such purity of love and in such divine power as he himself had been brought forth by God. But Adam stood no longer in the perfection of his first estate as the image and the likeness of God. The first step, therefore, towards the redemption and recovery of Adam beginning to fall was to take Eve out of him, that he might have a second trial and probation in paradise; in which, if he failed, an effectual Redeemer might then arise out of the

seed of the woman. Oh! my friends, what a wonderful procedure is there to be seen in the Divine Providence, always turning all evil, as soon as it appears, into a further display and an opening of new wonders of the wisdom and the love of God!' But you will start up as if you had been stung by the old serpent himself, and will angrily demand of me—Do I believe all that? My confident and overbearing friend, I neither believe it nor disbelieve it; for I do not know. But I believe about the first Adam, as I believe about the Second, that had it all been written even the world itself could not have contained the books. And the longer I live and listen and learn, the more slow I become of saying that I disbelieve anything that men like Moses hint at, and that men like Plato and Behmen and Law speak out: all three, all four, men whose shoe latchet neither you nor I are worthy to unloose. But, as Bishop Martensen quotes: 'The time has not yet come, and our language has not yet acquired the requisite purity, clearness, and depth to permit us to speak freely, and without, in some respect or other, provoking misunderstanding, upon a subject in which the deepest enigma of human existence is concentrated.'

But listen, and without interrupting him, to Moses on Eve, the mother of mankind. 'And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And the Lord God made a woman, and brought her unto the man. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had

made. And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened.' Eve gave to Adam that day, and Adam took at Eve's hand, what was not hers to give nor his to take. And any woman who gives to any man what is not hers to give nor his to take, their eyes, too, will be opened!

> Out of my sight, thou serpent! That name best
> Befits thee with him leagued, thyself as false
> And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape,
> Like his, and colour serpentine may show
> Thy inward fraud, to warn all creatures from thee
> Henceforth . . . Hate hard by lust.

O Eve, Eve! fatal mother of so many fatal daughters since! Would God thou hadst resisted the devil for thyself, for thy husband, and for us thy hapless children! O Eve, Eve, mother of all flesh! 'And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and I hid myself because I was naked. Who told thee that thou wast naked? And the man said, The woman Thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. I was alone, and Thou broughtest this woman to me. I rejoiced over her with singing. I blessed Thee for her. I took her to my heart. I said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my

flesh. And the Lord God said to the woman, Woman, what is this that thou hast done? So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.'

After the mystics, Milton is by far the best commentator on Moses. Masculine, massive, majestic, magnificent, melodious Milton! Hear Moses, then, on Eve, our much deceived, much failing, hapless mother, and then hear Milton.

MOSES

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.

MILTON

—I, ere thou spak'st,
Knew it not good for Man to be alone. . .
What next I bring shall please thee, be assured,
Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire.

MOSES

And the Lord God made a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam said, Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.

MILTON

Under His forming hands a creature grew,
Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd

And in her looks, which from that time infused
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspired
The spirit of love and amorous delight.
On she came,
Led by her Heavenly Maker, though unseen,
And guided by His voice; nor uninform'd
Of nuptial sanctity, and marriage rites:
Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.

Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring. By thee,
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother first were known.
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets.
Here Love his golden shaft employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings.
Sleep on, blest pair!

MOSES

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast which the Lord God had made.

MILTON

—I now must change
These notes to tragic; foul distrust, and breach
Disloyal on the part of man, revolt,
And disobedience: on the part of Heav'n
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke: sad task, yet argument
Not less but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles.

MOSES

And she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.

MILTON

Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her work gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.
Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan;
Sky lower'd, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal sin
Original.

MOSES

And the man said, The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

MILTON

To whom the Sovran Presence thus replied,
Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
Before His voice, or was she made thy guide
Superior, or but equal, that to her
Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place
Wherein God set thee? Adorn'd
She was indeed, and lovely to attract
Thy love, not thy subjection.

MOSES

And unto Adam He said, In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread.

MILTON

Idleness had been worse;
My labour will sustain me.
So spoke our father penitent.
To whom thus also th' angel last replied:
—Only add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, and faith,
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,

> By name to come called charity, the soul
> Of all the rest; then thou wilt not be loath
> To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
> A Paradise within thee happier far.
> He ended, and they both descend the hill;
> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide;
> They hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way.

Great-minded Milton! 'The great number of books and papers of amusement, which, of one kind or another, daily come in one's way have in part occasioned, and most perfectly fall in with, and humour, our idle way of reading and considering things. By this means, time even in solitude is happily got rid of without the pain of attention; neither is any part of it more put to the account of idleness, one can scarce forbear saying, or spent with less thought, than great part of that which is spent in reading.' Thus Butler. Let Moses and Milton and Butler be more read.

But it is high time to turn to Paul, who is a far greater authority and commentator on Moses than Plato, or Behmen, or Milton, or Law. Now, Paul does not say very much about Eve, but what he does say has in it all his characteristic strength, straightforwardness, and evangelical consolation. Adam was the protoplast, says Paul to Timothy, quoting the expression from the Wisdom of Solomon. Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 'Of the woman,' says the son of Sirach in his tremendous

attack on women, 'came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die.' How it might have been with us to-day if the serpent had tried his flattery and his lies on Adam we do not know, and we need not ask. Only, let the truth be told. The devil, as a matter of fact, never spake to Adam at all. He approached Eve with his glozing words. He succeeded with Eve, and then Eve succeeded with Adam. Flattery led the woman astray. And then love led the man astray. The man could not refuse what the woman offered. 'The woman was deceived,' says Bengel, 'the man was persuaded.' And, because Eve was first in the transgression, Moses put certain special punishments upon her in his day, and Paul put certain other humiliations, repressions, and submissions in his day. God, in Moses, laid on Eve that day

> The pleasing punishment that women bear;

as, also, that her desire should be to her husband, and that he should rule over her. O husbands of women! O young men, to whom is their desire! God help all such women! And, if their desire must so be, let us pray and labour at our tempers and at our characters, at our appetites and at our inclinations, lest their desire be their everlasting loss. 'With my soul have I desired Thee, O God, in the night. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thine heart. Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known My name. With long life will I satisfy him, and I will

show him My salvation. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.'

That emancipation of women which they owe to Jesus Christ had not had time to work itself fully out in Paul's day. And thus it is that we read in Paul's first Epistle to Timothy that the women are to learn in silence with all subjection, and that they are not to usurp authority, but are always to be in silence.

> To whom thus Eve with sad demeanour meek:
> Ill worthy I such title should belong
> To me transgressor, who for thee ordain'd
> A help, become thy snare; to me reproach
> Rather belongs, distrust and all dispraise.
> So spake, so wished, much humbled Eve.

'Let the women learn in silence,' and, 'I suffer not a woman to teach her husband, but to be in silence.' Yes; truth and beauty, Apostle Paul. But who is to be her husband? Who is to fill up the silence? All women would be proud to sit in silence if their husbands were like the husbands in Timothy's diocese; that is to say, if they would but speak out in the silence, and would speak out wisely, and advisedly, and lovingly, and always well. And, once in every woman's life she does sit as silent and as teachable as Paul himself would have her sit. When God takes her by the hand and brings her to the man for whom He has made her, then she for a season puts on the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit. 'Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as

ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.'

'Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in The Child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.' I am glad to see that the Revised Version leans to the mystical and evangelical interpretation of Paul's 'childbearing.' For, as Bishop Ellicott says, nothing could be more cold and jejune than the usual interpretation. And Paul is the last man to be cold and jejune on such a subject. Yes, I will believe with the learned revisers, and with some of our deepest interpreters, that Paul has the Seed of the Woman in the eye of his mind in this passage, and that he looks back with deep pity and love on his hapless mother Eve; and then, after her, on all women and on all mothers, and sees them all saved, with Eve and with Mary, by the Man that Mary got from the Lord, if they abide and continue in faith, in love, in holiness, and in sobermindedness.

III

CAIN

I HAVE GOTTEN A MAN FROM THE LORD

CAIN'S mother mistook Cain for Christ. As soon as Eve saw her first-born son she no longer remembered the anguish. What a joyful woman Eve was that day! For, what a new thing in the earth was that first child in the arms of that first mother! Just look at the divine gift. Look at his eyes. Look at his hands. Look at his sweet little feet. Count his fingers. Count too, his toes. See the lovely dimple in the little man's right hand. What a child! And all out of his own mother's bosom. And all his father's son. Adam's son. A second Adam. A new man all to themselves to keep for their own. Look at him taking his first step. Hear him essaying his first syllable; the first time he says, Mother! and the first time he tries to say, Father! The Garden of Eden, with all its flowers and fruits, was forgotten and forgiven from the day that heaven came down to earth; from the day on which Eve got her first-born son from the Lord God. Nor, if you think of it, is it at all

to be wondered at that little Cain's happy mother mistook him for Jesus Christ. Put yourself back into her place. Eve had brought banishment from Eden on her husband and on herself by listening to the father of lies. But the Lord God had come down to Eve in her terrible distress, and, beginning His book of promises with His best promise, had promised to her that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and should thus redeem and undo all the evil that she had brought on herself and on her husband. And here, already, blessed be God, is the promised seed! And that, too, sent in such a sweet, heart-satisfying, and heavenly way! A man from God in her own arms! Why, Eve would have been a cold-blooded, hard-hearted atheist if she had not so hailed the birth of her first-born son. She would have made God a liar unless she had said, This is our God: for we have waited upon Him and we have gotten a man from Him. And yet, with all that, it was not so to be. As we know now, Cain was not to be the Christ. No. The angel Gabriel was not sent to Adam and Eve. The Angel of the Annunciation who stands in the presence of God passed by Eve, and Sarah, and Rachel, and Hannah, and Elizabeth, and all the other mothers in Israel, and came to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.

And then, Cain and Abel as children together,—

till their mother's cup ran over. With what motherly love that first mother watched the two little brothers as they played together. Look at them planting a garden in their sport, and putting men and women of clay in the garden and calling the man a father and the woman a mother. Till, tired of their garden and its ever-falling fathers and mothers, the two little angels went off hand in hand to go and meet their own returning father. And then, with a child in each hand, Adam came home to Eve, saying, Surely these same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.

'And in process of time Abel became a keeper of sheep, but Cain, like his father, became a tiller of the ground. And Cain brought of the fruits of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering the Lord had not respect. And Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell. And the Lord said to Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.' Look at the seventh verse of the fourth chapter of Genesis, and you will see in that verse, and for the first time in the Bible, that terrible word SIN. That word, the most awful word ever uttered in heaven or earth or hell—SIN! John Milton is our best commentator on Moses. But Milton's description of SIN is far too dreadful for

me to repeat it here. Read it yourselves. Read the second book of *Paradise Lost*, and you will see SIN with her father and her son both standing beside her. And read, and read, and read over and over again Moses and Milton and yourself till you both see and feel both SIN and her father and her son all in yourself. Moses and Milton write for grown-up men, and not for babes who are still on their unskilful milk, as most men and women are.

Envy came to its full maturity all at once in Cain. Some sinful passions have taken time and environment to spring up and to mature to their full fruit in the human heart and in human life. But envy, the wickedest, the deadliest, and the most detestable of all our sinful passions, came to a perfect man all at once. Eve's first-born son envied his brother Abel. Cain envied Abel because of his goodness, and because his goodness had found him acceptance and praise of God. And in his envy and hate of his brother's goodness and acceptance Cain rose up and slew his brother. Envy, surely, even in the end of the world, can no further go than that. I defy the wickedest heart in this house to-night to improve upon the way of Cain. And yet let us not be too sure. Let us look yet closer at Cain; and, all the time, let us keep our eye upon ourselves and see.

Cain envied Abel. He envied his brother, his only brother, his trustful, confiding, affectionate brother, his brother who worshipped him, and who would have given him his altar, and his lamb, and his fire from heaven, and all that he had if Cain would but have laid aside his gloom and taken

it all. But no; Cain will not be beholden to his younger brother. Nothing will satisfy Cain now but one thing. A coal from hell has by this time so kindled hell in Cain's heart that all the rebukes and commands of Adam, and all the tears and embraces of Eve, and all the soft answers and submissions of Abel could not quench the wrath in Cain's evil eye, or take the fall out of his sunken countenance. Let the holy man here who has never had this same hell-fire in his heart at his brother, at his dearest and best and only friend on earth, at his old playfellow, at his present fellow-worshipper, let that happy man cast stones at that miserable wretch with murder in his heart at Abel his unsuspecting brother.

'Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.' The offence was aggravated by the motive, says Bacon in one place. And so it was with Cain's offence. For his motive was envy of his brother's goodness, and of the acceptance and the praise that his brother's growing goodness was every day bringing him from the Lord. 'The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.' That was all. But that was quite enough to kindle all hell in Cain's evil heart. And let our brother worship God alongside of our altar also, and let him find more acceptance with God and with man than we find; let him be better gifted of God and better placed by God; more approved of God and of God's people than we are, and you will soon see Cain. Praise the talents, the

industry, the achievements of our very best and dearest friend, and it is gall and wormwood to us. But blame him, belittle him, detract from him, pooh-pooh and sneer at him, and we will embrace you, for you have put marrow into our dead bones, you have given wine to him that was of a heavy heart. Praise a neighbouring minister's prayer, or his preaching, or his pastoral activity at another minister's table, and you will upset both him and his listening house for days and for years to come. Of the six sins that are said to forerun the sin against the Holy Ghost, the fourth in the fatal order is 'envy at another's grace.' Take care, then, how you gad about with a tongue in your head that no man can tame, and tempt good men and women toward that sin which shall never be forgiven them.

'And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.' Abel might have escaped his end, and might have saved his brother, if he had not been so easy, so innocent, and so unsuspecting. If he had even attended to his dog at his heel he would have seen that there was something wrong somewhere that morning. For Cain had not shut his eyes all last night. Cain could not sleep all last night. He had been up and out and all about all night like a ghost. His face was fallen in. His eyes were green and black. Abel's dog growled and barked at Cain as if he had been a vagabond already. Abel had never seen a corpse,

else Cain's face that day was like nothing in the world so much as the face of one of our corpses in its coffin. Nor did Cain talk like his usual self that morning. He stammered as he talked. He talked about things he had never, that Abel remembered, talked about before. Were it not that perfect innocence is so blind and so deaf, Abel would have found opportunity and would have turned home again that fatal morning. And even had Abel asked what Cain had against him that morning, Cain might have admitted fierce anger, or some other evil feeling at something or other, but he would never have admitted envy. No man from that day to this has ever admitted envy. To every other wickedness confession has often been made; but did you ever confess envy? or did you ever have envy confessed to you? No, never. I wonder, do the confessors in the confessional get at envy? If they do in the darkness and through the bitter brass, then there is something to be said for that heart-racking and sin-extorting system. No. Only by the stone, only by the dagger, only by the pistol, only by the cup, only by the bitten back and the slandered name is envy ever found out. In his noble answer to Tilken's abominable libel Jacob Behmen says, 'We, poor children of Eve, no longer walk together in the love of God; but, full of passion, we envy, vilify, dishonour, and denounce one another, wishing to one another death and all kinds of evil; we enjoy, as we enjoy nothing else, each other's loss and pain and misery.'

'And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?' The Lord asked at Cain what He knew quite well, in order that Cain might know that the Lord knew. But, instead of telling the Lord and Adam and Eve where Abel was buried, and instead of crying all his days ever after to the Lord, Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, Cain gave to the Lord the brazen-faced answer, Am I my brother's keeper? 'And the Lord said, What is this that thou hast done? A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.' And not Cain, and all unarrested murderers only. We are all fugitives and vagabonds in the earth. We all are, or we ought to be. For the voice of our brother's blood cries to God against us. And, one day, we shall all be arrested and arraigned on that very same charge before the judgment-seat of Christ; unless, indeed, we surrender ourselves before that seat is set. 'For this is the message that we have heard of Him, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' It was an old superstition that a murdered man's body began to run warm blood again as soon and as often as its murderer was brought near it. And in this way they used to discover who the real murderer was. Now, just suppose that that was indeed a natural or a supernatural law in the age of the world and in the land in which we live,—how many men still living would begin

to be all over with blood in your presence? The man sitting next you at this moment would be like a murdered corpse. The preacher now standing before you; your mother's son; the very wife of your bosom, when she does not flatter and fawn upon you; your own son; your dearest friend. Yes; you would then be what Cain all his days was, and all men finding you would slay you. They would not know, they would be horrified at what it meant, when their throats began to run blood as they passed you on the street, or as you talked with them in the field, or as you sat eating and drinking with them at your table, or at their table, or at the Lord's table. But you know. And you know their names. Let their names, then, be heard of God in your closet every day and every night, lest they be proclaimed from the housetops to your everlasting confusion and condemnation at the last day.

And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and Cain wandered up and down a fugitive and a vagabond, thinking every bush an officer, till a child was born to him in his banishment. Dr. Delitzsch, that old evangelical exegete who is so much at home among all those Old Testament men, tells us that Cain called his child by a name such as the rich man in hell might have called his child by if an heir had been born to him in his place of torment. For Cain said, Let his name be called Enoch, for God hath sent His angel to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue. And little Enoch and his mother somewhat lifted the curse off Cain, and somewhat quieted and rested Cain's vaga-

bond heart. And Cain builded a city and called it Enoch, after his son, for he said, Here will I rest and dwell and hide myself, for God hath refreshed me and hath revived me with my wife and children. And, with that, Cain the murderer of Abel passes out of our knowledge. But let us hope and believe that the presence of the Lord came and dwelt in that city of Cain and his wife and children, according to the splendid psalm—'O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.'

Now, since all this was written for our warning, and for our learning—come, all envious-minded men and women, come with me, and let us offer to God the envious-minded man's prayer. We have never confessed envy to man, but God knows our hearts. 'O dear God, never suffer the devil to rub his vilest leprosy of envy upon me. Never let me have the affections of the desperate and the damned. Let it not be ill with me when it is well with others. Let me have Thy Holy Spirit to promote my brother's good, and to give Thee thanks for all his prosperity and praise. Never censuring his actions curstly, nor detracting from his praises spitefully, nor upbraiding his infelicities maliciously, but pleased with all things that Thou doest or givest. That we may all join together in the communion of saints, both here and hereafter, in grace and in glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

IV

ABEL

THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING

IGHTEOUS Abel would have silenced his own accusing blood if he only could. When Cain suddenly struck him down, dying Abel took all the blame on himself. As long as he could speak Abel excused his brother, and sought to be reconciled to his brother. He put himself in the wrong and his brother in the right. He saw, now, when it was too late, how he had grieved and vexed and offended his brother. He had not thought about his brother. He had not put himself into his brother's place. He had not looked at things with his brother's eyes. He had been glad, and he had let his gladness too much appear, when his own offerings were respected and his brother's despised. Forgive me, O my God! Forgive me, O my brother! was Abel's last prayer. Whatever dead Abel's blood may have cried, I feel sure what dying Abel himself cried. Lord, lay not this blow to my brother's charge, he cried. And when Abel had said that again and again he fell asleep.

If Cain had only done the exact opposite of what

he immediately did as soon as he had buried Abel; if he had only determined in spite of it all still to abide in the land of Eden; if he had only kept himself in the presence of the Lord, and had not allowed himself to go out from the presence of the Lord; if he had only laid the foundations of his city beside Abel's grave, then Abel's prayer for his brother would have been heard, and Abel's blood from that day would have begun to speak almost like the blood of Christ itself. Had Cain all his after days prevented the dawning of the morning that he might offer unceasing sacrifices beside his brother's grave; had he risen from his bed at midnight till, being in an agony, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground on Abel's grave; then Cain would have been a pattern that in him God might first show forth all long-suffering to those who should after Cain believe to life everlasting. And if you would but determine to learn to-night of Cain and Abel; if you would but keep at home and dwell in the presence of your past sin, and in the presence of the Lord; if you would but build your house, and if God would but prepare your table, in the presence of your enemies; now that Christ's atoning blood has taken the place of Abel's accusing blood; now that Christ's peace-speaking blood is every day and every night being sprinkled from heaven upon His and other men's murderers,—you would even yet escape being a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and would be made a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.

Where, then, is Abel thy brother? Answer that on the spot. Where hast thou hid him? Say on the spot, Lord, come with me and I will shew Thee. Go back often to Abel's grave. Go back continually to your past life. Go back to your school days. Go back to your college days. Go back to your first office, your first shop, your first workshop. Recall your first friend. Pass before your eyes the first young man, the first young woman, you were intimate with. Call up the long-mouldered corpse of your first affection, your first passion, your first love, your first lust. Give instances. Give names; and ask if God has another case like yours in all His Book. Face full in the face that monstrous folly; that word, that act, that makes you blush scarlet and turn in your seat to think of it. They are turning on their beds in hell at this moment for far less. Go back to that farmhouse in the country, to that hamlet up among the hills, out of which you were so glad to escape from the presence of the Lord, and from the place of your sin, and get away to hide yourself in the great city. See how one ghost awakens another ghost till they come up an army of the ghosts of dead men and dead women against you. Men and women now dead, and in their own places. Men and women also still alive, but dead to you, —would God they were! Men and women who, when they, or their children, or only their spoken or written names pass before you, make you wish they were dead—they or you. Go back, I say. In God's name, in God's strength, go back! Take

time, and go back. Take trouble, and go back. Take pains, and go back. Do not grudge time and trouble and pains. You will be well paid for all your time and trouble in humiliation, in remorse, and in godly sorrow. Even if you took, what Cain, it is to be feared, did not take—even if you took one whole hour every night alone with your past life, it would not be mis-spent time. Redeem the time. Redeem it, and you will be justified for so doing long before the great white throne is set. No; one whole hour every twenty-four hours of your present life would not be too much time to give to go over your past life. I undertake that if you will go home, and shut your door, and begin with such an hour to-night, you will not fall asleep in your chair. Why are you so pushed for time to repent? Why is retrospection the only thing that you have no time for, and always push it into a corner? Is it because you are not your brother's keeper? Is it because you never struck a foul blow in the field? Is it because no grey head has ever gone down to a grave that your hands dug? Is it because no young man's faith, and no young woman's trust, and no unsuspecting friend's good name has ever been shaken, or deceived, or pulled down and murdered by you? Have your hands been always so washed in innocency? Are there no tears against you in God's bottle, and no names in His book? God takes care and account not of murdered lives only, but also of murdered names and reputations. How many men and women have we all struck at with that sharp razor, an

envious, malicious, murderous tongue? Work at your consciences, you children of God, till they are as quick to detect, to record, and to recollect an unkind, unjust, unhandsome, slighting, detracting, belittling, sneering word, or look, or shrug, as they are to keep you in mind of a foul blow in a field, and a far-back grave in a wood. It would lay some high heads here low enough this night if the graves of all the good names and reputations they have had a hand in murdering were to suddenly open around them. All good men, all men of God, keep a whole churchyard of such graves ever open before them. And, if you do not, whatever you may think you are, and whatever other men may think you are, Christ, your angry Judge, knows what you are.

There are no ministers here, but there are a good many divinity students who will too soon be ministers. Will they listen and let me speak a word or two to them on the blood of Abel? One word which I have purchased a right to speak. Alas! alas! We are called and ordained to be our brother's keeper long before any one has taken us and shown us the way to keep ourselves. And with what result? With what result let our communion-rolls and our visiting-books answer. If any minister would be shut up and determined to preach nothing else and nothing ever but the peace-speaking blood of Christ, let him read every night in his communion-roll, in his young communicants' class list, and in his pastoral visitation-book. *That* name, *that* name, *that* name, that *family* of names! Where are the owners of all these names? What account

can I give of them? If they are not here to-night, where are they? Why are they not here, and why are they where they are? What a preacher Paul must have been, and what a pastor, and supported and seconded by what a staff of elders, since he was able to say to his assembled kirk-session in Ephesus that he was clear of the blood of all his people! What mornings to his tent-making, and to his sermons, and to his epistles; and what afternoons and evenings to humility, and to tears, and to temptations, both publicly and from house to house! Like Samuel Rutherford, and long before his day, always at his books, always among his people, always at their sick-beds, always catechising their children, always preaching and always praying. No, I know no reading so humbling, so condemning, so killing to us ministers as our communion-roll. We ministers must always appear before our people, and before God, clothed from head to foot with humility, with a rope upon our heads, and with nothing in our hands or in our mouths but the cross of Christ and the blood of Christ, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The blood of Christ! O my brethren, what blood the blood of Christ must be! What wonderful, what wonder-working blood! What amazing blood! How can even the blood of Christ atone for, and make amends to God and man for, all our envy, and malice, and murder of men's bodies, souls, and reputations? The more I think of that—I do not know, I cannot tell, I cannot imagine. And then, not atonement and amends only, not bare pardon

for all the past only, but eternal life, and all that leads up to eternal life, and all that eternal life is and contains. For the Holy Ghost also is the purchase of Christ's blood, a new heart also, and a whole lifetime of the means of grace. The Bible also, the Sabbath day, the Lord's table, a minister after God's own heart, deep, divine, unsearchable providences, a peaceful death-bed, a happy resurrection morning, a place at the right hand of the Judge, an open acknowledgment and acquittal on the day of judgment, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father,' and then a mansion with our own name in blood upon its door-post and its lintel to all eternity! Yes; precious blood indeed! What blood that must be that can so outcry and drown silent in its depths all the accusing cries that are even now going up to God all behind me and all around me! I feel that I would need a whole Redeemer and all His redeeming blood to myself. But, then, after that fountain filled with blood has drowned in the depths of the sea all the accusations that my sinful life has raised against me, that same blood will still flow for you and will do the same service for you. And the blood of Christ is the same blood yesterday, to-day, and for ever. For after it has spoken better things than that of Abel to you and to me, it will still abide and will still do the same service to our children and to their children, till a multitude that no man can number have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. No wonder that Paul called that blood not the blood of Christ only, but the blood of God.

V

ENOCH

AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD: AND HE WAS NOT; FOR GOD TOOK HIM

HEN a reader of the Bible first steps across the borders of the Bible, and, for love of the Bible, begins to read the ancient books that lie around and beneath the Bible, he comes sometimes upon a real treasure, but more often upon a heap of rubbish. When a reader of the Bible first hears of The Book of Enoch, taking Coleridge's excellent advice, he sells his bed to buy that book. Enoch walked with God, he says to himself. I have the whole Bible in my hands, all written, he says to himself, by men all of whom so walked, but let me get all the books of all such men, before I have either time or money for any other manner of man or any other kind of book. But when, after long looking for it, he at last holds The Book of Enoch in his hand, it is with what a disappointment! For one thing, he soon sees that he has been deceived and imposed upon. Enoch! He has not read the first chapter of the book till it is as clear as day to him that Enoch never saw the book that goes under his

ancient name; and besides, it is simply impossible that any man who had ever walked with God as Enoch walked could have written a single chapter of such an inflated and fantastic book. In four verses of his own Bible—in two verses in the Old Testament, and in two verses in the New Testament—there is more truth and more beauty and more guidance how he is to walk with God, than there is in all the hundred and eight chapters of the so-called Book of Enoch taken together. Still, our Bible scholars must work on in rubbish-heaps like The Book of Enoch, if only for the sake of the chips and the filings of the Bible that are sometimes to be found there. But unless you are a Bible scholar, and are able to get good out of a book that returns but a far-off echo of your Bible, you will spend your time and your money far better than by spending either on The Book of Enoch. 'And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.' There is substance there for him who knows what substance is, and there is style there for him who knows what style is. And that is but one single verse out of a whole Bible full of such substance and such style.

This, then, is the book of the generations of Adam. 'Adam begat a son in his likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth. And Adam lived after he had begotten Seth, he begat sons and daughters, and he died. And Seth lived, and died. And Enos lived, and died. And Cainan lived, and died. And Mahalaleel lived, and died. And Jared lived, and begat Enoch. And Jared lived after he begat

Enoch, and begat sons and daughters, and he died. And Enoch begat Methuselah. And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah, and begat sons and daughters. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.' What is that? Let us go back upon that. Let us ponder all that passage over again. Adam and all his sons, after they had begotten sons and daughters, died. But of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, we read very differently. Adam, and Seth, and Enos, and Cainan, and Mahalaleel, and Jared all lived, they simply lived on, after they had had children born to them, and then died. But Enoch walked with God after his first child was born. As much surely as to say—could anything be said with more plainness?—that it was only after his first child was born to him that Enoch really and truly began to walk with God. Fathers and mothers, young fathers and young mothers, fathers and mothers whose first child has just been born, and no more—seize your opportunity. Let not another day pass. Begin to-day. Begin to-night. It is late, if not yet too late, with the most of us; but it is not yet too late with you. Take Enoch for your father. Take him for your patron patriarch. Take him for your example. Follow him in his blessed footsteps in his family life. It was his first son that made Enoch a saint. As soon as he saw his first child in his image, and in his arms, Enoch became from that day a new man. All men begin to walk for a short season with God when their first child is born; only Enoch, alone almost of all men, held on as he had begun.

Enoch's heart ran over to God when his first child was born; and his tender, noble, princely heart never went back from that day from God, never grew cold again, never grew hard again, and never again forgot or neglected God. And as child followed child, Enoch, their father, grew more and more in grace with the growth of his house, till at the last he was not, for God took him. What an inheritance of blessed memories Enoch's children must have had! We all have fathers and mothers with God, for God has taken them; but, unless it was Elijah's children, no man's children ever looked up to heaven with such wondering and worshipping eyes as Enoch's children looked. My father! my father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!

Enoch, the wisest and the happiest of men, began his religious life where most men have not yet come to at the end of their religious life. He began by believing that God is. With us, with all that we can do, we but attain to occasional hopes and confused convictions that perhaps God is. We do not, indeed, even at our worst, in as many words deny that God is. But scarce one in a thousand of our actions is performed, scarce one in a thousand of our words is spoken, on the pure and clear and sure ground that God is. At our best we believe in a languor and in a dream that God is away out somewhere in the universe. We call Him 'infinite' in our catechisms and in our creeds, in our psalms and in our prayers, not thinking what we are saying, and then we go away and live as if He were infinitely far away from us and from this whole world. Only,

after death, when at last death comes, we fear that, somewhere and somehow, we shall see God. But Enoch never saw death, because he ever saw God. Enoch never died. Enoch did not need to die. Death could do nothing for Enoch. Death was neither friend nor enemy, first nor last, to Enoch. Death was not appointed for men like Enoch. As Dr. Herrick has it in his *Heretics of Yesterday*, Enoch was the first recorded mystic. 'The first mystic of whom we have any record was Enoch, and the four words which furnish us with his whole biography is the best definition we have of true spiritual mysticism,—Enoch walked with God.' You are an orthodox theologian when you take pen and ink and subscribe with your hand that God is. But you become a mystical theologian and a spiritual man when you begin to believe with your whole heart that God is beside you, and within you, and is nowhere else for you but in your own heart. Commonplace men see now and then a skirt of God, and catch now and then a broken ray, a scintilla, as a mystic would say, of God's glory; but Enoch walked with God up and down the land of Eden, as a man walketh with his friend. God was in Enoch's heart. 'He looked within and saw God mirrored there.' Enoch, from the day that his little child was born, felt God shed abroad in his heart. He entered every new morning into his own heart to walk there with God. He walked abroad every morning with his child in his arms, and with his God in his heart. Enoch so entered and so dwelt with God in his own heart, that God could

not endure to loan him to this world any longer. When I first heard tell that there was a Book of Enoch, did I not promise myself a great treat! What an autobiography that must be! I wonder, will Enoch enter into particulars, I said to myself, and will he give instances, and tell in plain pedestrian words, giving chapter and verse, and step after step, just as I can understand it and imitate it, how he, Enoch, walked with God: really, and on his own solid feet, and on this solid earth, how he walked with God? But when I made an effort and got the book, what was I in every chapter introduced to and made to walk with, but cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, angels and devils, seven holy ones, and four holy ones, and three holy ones; behemoth and leviathan; wild camels, wild boars, wild dogs; eagles and elephants and foxes; giant men and siren women—till I rose up and put Enoch in my shelf and took down William Law. Took William Law to my heart and read in him for the thousandth time his two golden chapters showing, How all orders and all ranks of men and women of all ages are obliged to devote themselves to God; as, also, How great devotion to God fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoyed in this world. Till, like everybody who takes up William Law, I could not lay him down till I had come to his concluding chapter, 'Of the excellency and greatness of a devout spirit.' And then, when I turned the last page, and came to the printer's name, I felt like that member of my young men's class who told me that he read Law slowly and

grudgingly, counting the pages every now and then, lest he should come too soon to the end. Yes, Dr. Herrick, you are right; Enoch was the first mystic, and his biography is written in as few words as would have pleased the arch-mystics themselves. Enoch, the true and genuine Enoch, never wrote a book, far less The Book of Enoch. But he did for us what very few books know anything about, he walked with God, and so sets us on thinking what walking with God might mean. My brethren, I am not making play with solemn words, nor am I practising upon you when I say it—walking with God is both the most difficult thing and the most easy thing in all the world. It is so difficult as to be found positively an impossibility by most men; while to one man here and there among men it is as easy to him as breathing is, as easy as eating is when he is hungry, and as drinking is when he is thirsty. Suppose you had exhorted Cain to begin to walk with God from the day that he murdered Abel—it would have taken nothing short of a miracle to make the murderer do it. A miracle could have made him do it, but it would have been a miracle. But suppose, on the other hand, that Enoch had for any cause fallen out of step with God for a single day, what a weary and heavy-laden man you would have had in Enoch that night! But, not to wander so far from home, how few of us ourselves ever enter into our own hearts, where alone God walks with men. God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor walketh on the pavement that leads up to such temples. Your first

step in the direction of God is not taken when you put on your Sabbath clothes and walk demurely into your pew. No; but it is taken when you put on humility upon your proud heart, and fill your hot heart full of meekness, and resignation, and quietness, and contrition, and a broken, heavenly, holy heart. To hold your peace when you are reproved is a direct and sure step toward God. To be silent when you suffer wrong—God takes at that great moment a great step of His toward you. To let a slight, an insult, a blow, a scoff, a sneer fall on your head like an excellent oil, and on your heart like your true desert—with that man will I dwell, says the God of Israel in His prophet. Every step you take out of an angry heart and into a meek heart; out of envy and into admiration and honour; out of ill-will and into good-will;—on the spot your heavenly Father seeth you and loveth you, and sayeth to His angels, Hast thou considered My new servant? Enoch, on the day his first child was born, just began to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, and as a new-born babe desired the sincere milk of the word that he might grow thereby. He just began to live in the Spirit before the dispensation of the Spirit, and walked in the Spirit even before the Spirit was as yet given. And though his family, and his friends, and his enemies did not know so much as the very name of the fruit of the Spirit, they all ate and drank that fruit in Enoch's walk and conversation; for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and such like.

Are any of you, my brethren, in your secret heart, in continual fear of death? Are you, though no one knows it, all your lifetime subject to that terrible bondage? Well, Enoch of all the Bible characters is the best of them all for you. For Enoch was translated that he should not see death. Begin then to-night, and as long as you are left on the earth a living man walk with Enoch. Walk with God. Walk with Him into whose presence death never comes, and in whose whole kingdom no grave is ever dug. You have neglected God until to-night. But you are not yet dead. Your body is still warm and free and your own. Your soul is still in this church this Sabbath night. You are not yet in hell. God has not yet in anger said, Cut that cumberer down! Instead of that, He is still waiting to be gracious to you. Begin, then, to walk all the rest of your life on earth with God. And, if you are not to have your name added to the names of Enoch and Elijah; if you are not to be translated; if you are not to remain and to be alive when Christ comes; even so, your death, if it must be, will only be a circumstance in your walk with God. It will only be a striking and a never-to-be-forgotten incident and experience to you. It will only be a new departure, the opening up of a new prospect, and your first entrance on that which God hath prepared for them that love Him. If you will only walk close enough with Enoch and with Enoch's God you will never really taste death.

You will not know where you are. Is it past? you will ask in astonishment. Am I really gone over Jordan? And it will all be because you importuned so often on earth, and said, and would not be kept quiet from saying, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Behold, now, thy Deliverer for whom thou didst so often cry; behold, He has come at thy cry, and has come for thee out of Zion. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

VI

JUBAL

HE WAS THE FATHER OF ALL SUCH AS HANDLE THE HARP AND THE ORGAN

THE Bible has a way of its own of setting the solitary in families. Over and above, and sometimes entirely superseding the original and natural order of father and son, the Bible sets up an intellectual, a moral, and a spiritual order of fatherhood and sonship. As, for instance, thus: In the natural order, according to the flesh, as the Bible would say, Adam was the father of Cain, and Cain was Adam's first-born son. But, in the moral order, Cain was Satan's first-born son. Cain was of his father the devil. The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and Cain took, at his deepest, of his father in hell, for he hated his brother in his heart till he fell upon his brother at an unawares in the field and slew him. Cain was of that wicked one and slew his brother. And that deep and quick principle of family life runs through the whole of the Bible till it comes to a head, and to its fullest and clearest and most commanding expression in the other direction, in that house in

Israel when the Son of God stretches forth His hand toward His disciples, and says, Behold My mother and My brethren!

Now, Jubal would seem to have been a solitary man so far as sons and daughters were concerned. Jubal had a brother, Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. But the Bible is silent as to any children begotten of his own body that Jubal had. The only children that Jubal had in his image and after his likeness were his harp and his organ. For children's shouts and laughter all up and down his solitary house Jubal had only now the sound of his harp and now the sound of his organ. Jubal took to inventing and perfecting his harp and his organ because he had no other children with whom to play and to whom to sing. Or, perhaps, it was that the melodious soul of Jubal was so hurt within him at the way that

> disproportion'd sin
> Jarr'd against nature's chime, and with harsh din
> Broke the fair music that all creatures made
> To their great Lord,

that at last he rose up and said, Go to, I will make melody to God with a stringed instrument and with a praise-breathing pipe if men and women will so forget God. And it was so. And Jubal did so. As for me and my house, Jubal said, we shall make melody in our hearts to God. And he made that melody along with those two children of his, till his harp and his organ were more to him than sons and daughters; far more than Cain and Abel were

to Adam, and far more than Shem and Ham and Japheth were to Noah. These same, he said, as he knit a new string into his harp, and hollowed out a new pipe for his organ—these same shall comfort me concerning my work and the toil of my hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed. And Jubal walked with God after he begat his harp and his organ. And Jubal lived and added string to string in his harp, and pipe to pipe in his organ, till God's angels came and took Jubal home to his harp of gold.

By the time of Moses and Aaron Jubal had a whole tribe to himself of sons and daughters in those melodious men and women who rose up and called him their very and true father, and blessed his honoured name. Do you suppose that Jubal's great name was ungratefully forgotten on the shore of the Red Sea that morning? Do not think it. Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?' And after the schools of the prophets arose in Israel, Jubal's name would be written in letters of gold upon the lintels and the door-posts of those ancient homes of religion and learning and art. 'And Samuel kissed the Lord's anointed, and he said to the Lord's anointed, After that thou hast come to the hill of God it shall come to pass that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret,

and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy. And the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and thou shalt be turned into another man.' And still, if you would hear sacred music at its best, and see sacred spectacle at its best, do not go either to the Sistine chapel in Rome, or to the Bayreuth theatre in Bavaria, but come to the temple of Solomon, the house of the Lord at Jerusalem. If you would see Jubal's children in their multitudes and at their highest honours, come up to Jerusalem at one of the great feasts. And if you would never be a niggard again in your contributions to the worship of God, read over and over again the two Books of The Chronicles in your so musical Bible. 'So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. And he gathered all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. Now, the number of the Levites, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. Of which, four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made (said David) to praise therewith.' And again, 'He set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet, for so was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets. And the Levites stood with instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Moreover, the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer; and they sang praises with glad-

ness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.' The temple in Jerusalem was the earthly palace of Israel's heavenly King; and for riches, and for beauty, and for melody of voices, and for instruments of music God gave commandment that His earthly temple should be made as near to the pattern of His heavenly temple as the hands of His people Israel could make it. 'Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which day and night stand before God in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in His sanctuary and bless the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion.'

The experts in that kind of history tell us that all the evidence that is forthcoming goes to prove that the apostolic and post-apostolic churches did not make much use of musical instruments in public worship. And the reasons they give for that state of things—a state of things so unlike the Church in Israel in ancient times, and the Church Catholic in modern times—are such as these: The poverty of the people; their persecuted and unsettled condition; and the fact that all the musical instruments then attainable had become incurably tainted with the theatrical and other immoral associations of that dissolute day. But it is pointed out that, as time went on, and when the Christian faith and the Christian worship became the faith and the worship of the empire, then Jubal came back again; till, as we know, in some parts of Christendom to-day he takes up the whole time and performs the whole service. In the Life of St. Philip Neri, Dr. Newman's

patron saint, there is a beautiful chapter on Music. It was written in dear old Philip's rule for his spiritual children that they should all study to rouse themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things by means of musical harmony. And we are told that the sweet old saint was profoundly convinced that there is in music and in song a mysterious and a mighty power to stir the heart with high and noble emotions; as also an especial fitness to raise the heart above time and sense to the love and pursuit of heavenly things. And it was his own exquisite sensitiveness to all harmony that gave him that extraordinary sweetness of expression, of speech, and of gesture which made him so dear to all.

As to the Reformers, we find Luther in his *Table Talk* full of his best heart-eloquence about music. 'The fairest and most glorious gift of God,' he exclaims, 'is music. Kings and princes and great lords should give their support to music. Music is a discipline; it is an instructress; it makes people milder and gentler, more moral, and more reasonable.' 'Music,' he says in another place, 'is a fair and glorious gift of God, and takes its place next to theology. I would not part with my small skill in music for much.' And yet again: 'Music is a fair and sweet gift of God. Music has often given me new life, and inspired me with a desire to preach. Saint Augustine had a conscientious scruple about music. He was, however, a noble and a pious man, and if he lived now he would be on our side.' As to the use of instrumental music in the services of

the Church of England, it is most interesting and most instructive to find Taylor, with his resounding style, leaning, if anything, against it; while Hooker, with his magnificent sober-mindedness, stands up stoutly for it. Hooker, as his contention with the Puritans goes on, becomes all for instrumental music. That is to say, if Hooker can ever be said to be all for anything but height, and depth, and a superb sober-mindedness.

Those who, like St. Augustine, are noble and pious men, and who like him have a conscientious scruple about instrumental music, if they are determined to fight for their scruple, they will find an all-but-unanswerable arsenal of fighting materials in Jeremy Taylor. Yes, in Jeremy Taylor, of all men in the world. And lest they should not possess the incomparable preacher and debater, I will, in fairness to the truth, supply them with a stone or two for their sling out of that great genius. 'The use of musical instruments,' says Taylor in his *Ductor Dubitantium*, 'may also add some little advantage to singing; but such instruments are more apt to change religion into airs and fancies, and to take off some of its simplicity. Organs are not so fitted as sermons and psalms are for edification. The music of instruments of itself does not make a man wiser; it does not instruct him in anything. At the same time, I cannot condemn it if it be employed as an aid to true psalmody. And yet, at its best, music must not be called so much as a circumstance of divine service, for that is the best that can be said even of the voice itself.' And then the omnivor-

ously bookish bishop goes on to fortify his cautious position out of all the apostolic fathers, as his way is. And his way is a right learned, able, and eloquent way, as you will see if you will buy or borrow his *Ductor Dubitantium*, and will redeem enough time to read it. Which you must all do before you root your mind and your heart and your will irrevocably either for or against instrumental music. Read the best that has been written both for and against every subject whatsoever, before you root your temper either for or against the subject in question. And if you are still deep in your reading when the debate is hot, and the votes are being canvassed for, just say to the canvasser that you are not yet half through your reading, and that he must go and enlist those whose reading is finished, and whose enlightened and enfranchised minds are ready for him. And if your too much reading holds you in from making a speech or even from recording a silent vote, you will have lost nothing. You know, and we all know, how you lost your temper, your self-command, and the respect and love of some of your fellow-worshippers, by the way you spoke so often and so long, and voted so ostentatiously, before you had begun to read, or to listen to those who had read, on a former occasion.

And then, reading, and listening to those who have read, and all,—before we either open our mouth on this question of music, or cast our vote, a little imagination rightly directed, a very little imagination, will save us from making fools of ourselves, and it will keep us back from offering to God

the sacrifice of a fool. Just imagine Almighty God, with this universe of angels and men in His heart and on His hands, and engaged day and night in steering it into an everlasting harbour of harmony and peace, and truth, and wisdom, and love. Take in something of the magnificence and the wisdom and the love of God. And then imagine Him looking down and listening to one of our debates with all our passions in a flame as to whether we are to worship our Maker with a psalm or with a hymn or with a sentence; with an American organ, or with a real, home-built, and high-priced English organ; and, in another place, whether the line is to be given out by the precentor, or the whole psalm read once for all by the minister — and so on to an adjourned meeting on the question. Imagine Gabriel who stands before God, with twain of his burning wings covering his face, and with twain covering his feet, and with twain wherewith to fly —imagine that seraph, full to a flame of the majesty and the glory of God, looking down on the church of God on earth and seeing a minister of Jesus Christ sewing up the paraphrases with needle and thread on a Sabbath morning in terror and in anger lest a neighbour minister should come and give out, 'O God of Bethel' to be sung to the God of Bethel; or 'Twas on that night'; or, 'How bright these glorious spirits shine.' You have heard about the angels weeping, have you not? If you were where Jubal now is you would see their head waters over the way that we quarrel, fall out, and hate one another about our worship of God. Why, very

Baal himself would be ashamed of such worshippers, with such ideas and with such passions as we have. The fly-god himself would cast us and our vain oblations out of his presence. 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' Only be at peace among yourselves, He says to us. Only give place to one another. Only be of one mind. Only please one another to edification, and you will best please Me. Only agree about it among yourselves first, and then come into My house with a psalm, or with a hymn, or with a spiritual song, or with a harp, or with an organ, or with what you will. Call in Jubal, My servant, to assist you, if you feel you need his assistance, and if you are unanimous in your call. Or, sit still as you are till you are unanimous, and let your neighbours call him in who are already unanimous. Only, My little children, have peace among yourselves, and love one another, and so shall ye be Mine accepted worshippers. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.'

VII

NOAH

MAKE THEE AN ARK

EVEN after the four full chapters that Moses gives to Noah, Peter in the New Testament makes a very important addition to our knowledge of Noah. 'Noah the eighth person was a preacher of righteousness,' adds the apostle. We have it in as many words from Moses himself, and he gives almost the half of one of his chapters to it, that Noah became a planter of vineyards and an owner of vineyards and a dealer with wine in his old age. But with only eight souls saved, and some of them scarcely saved, there was no evidence at all in Moses that the divine ordinance of preaching had been as yet set up on the earth, and much less that Noah was ordained to that office. Now, as a preacher myself I have a deep professional interest, as well as some other deep interests, in asking myself why it was that Noah was so signally unsuccessful as a preacher. Was it because it was righteousness that he preached? That may very well have been it; for so far as my own experience goes, righteousness is the one thing that our hearers will

not have at our hands. All other kinds of preaching—polemical preaching, apologetical preaching, historical and biographical preaching, sacramental preaching, evangelical preaching — some of our people will welcome, and will indeed demand; but they will all agree in refusing and resenting the preaching of righteousness; the preaching of repentance and reformation; the preaching of conversation and conduct and character. No; they would not have it. Josephus supplements Moses and Second Peter, and tells us that Noah preached and pleaded with them to change their dispositions and their actions till he was afraid they would kill him. Of one thing we are sure, Noah did not discredit his preaching by his life, as so many of our preachers do. For Noah had this testimony as long as he was a preacher, that he walked with God. Thee, said the Lord to Noah in giving him his instructions about the ark—Thee only have I seen righteous before Me. My father's tutor, says the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, believed all that he professed, and practised all that he enjoined. Could it have been that the preacher's sons and daughters undid all their father's preaching as soon as he had preached it? Physician, heal thyself, did his congregations call out to the preacher of righteousness as he came down from his pulpit and went home to his house? Yes, that would be it. I am almost sure that would be it. For one sinner still destroyeth much good. And we know that Noah had one son—he was his second son, Ham—who helped to bring down his father's grey hairs with

sorrow to the grave. What way could a preacher of righteousness be expected to make with a son like his second son among his sons at home? No way at all. It was impossible. That, I feel almost certain, would be it.

I am not to ask you to enter with me into the theophanies of the flood, nor into the naval architecture of Noah and Moses, nor into the geology that emerged after the flood was over, nor into the longevity of Noah and the distribution of his sons. My one and sole aim with you is a practical aim. My one and sole remaining ambition in life is to preach righteousness. To preach righteousness,—the nature of it, the means to attain it, the terrible difficulty of attaining it, and the splendid reward it will be to him who at last attains it. To preach righteousness, and all matters connected with righteousness, first to myself, then to my sons, and then to my people. This one thing I do. And in this one light shall I ask you to look at Noah, and at his ark, and at his vineyards, and at his wine, and at Ham, his reprobate son.

Not only did Noah preach his best and his most earnest as the end drew near; not only Noah himself, but every tree that fell in the forest, and every plank that was laid in the ark; every axe-stroke and the echo of every hammer was a louder and ever louder call to the men of that corrupt and violent day to flee from the wrath to come. But, sad to say, the very men without whose help the ark would never have been built; the very men who felled the trees, and planed and laid the planks, and

careened and caulked the seams of the finished ship —those very men failed to take a passage in that ship for themselves, for their wives and for their children. Many a skilled and high-paid carpenter, many a strong-limbed and grimy-faced blacksmith, and many a finisher and decorator in woodwork and in iron, must have gnashed their teeth and cursed one another when they saw their children drowning all around them, and the ark shut, and borne up, and lifted up above the earth. But those carpenters and blacksmiths and finishers were wise men and their loss was salvation compared with many of those architects and builders and ornamenters of churches who compete with one another and undersell one another in our day. As also compared with all those publishers and printers and booksellers of Bibles, and all those precentors and choirs and organists, and all those elders and deacons and door-keepers, who are absolutely indispensable to the kingdom of God, but who are all the time themselves outside of it. The Gibeonites in Israel were hewers of wood and drawers of water to Israel; they dwelt in Israel, and had their victuals there, but they were all the time aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. And all Noah's own excellent sermons, all his pulpit appeals about righteousness, and all his crowds of congregations would not have kept his grey head above the rising waters that he had so often described in his sermons, had he not himself gone and done what the Lord commanded him to do. That is to say, had he not, not only prepared the ark, but had he not gone up into the

ark, and asked the Lord to shut him in. We ministers may preach the very best of gospels to you, and yet at the end of our ministry be castaways ourselves. 'What if I,' wrote Rutherford to Lady Kenmure—'What if I, who can have a subscribed testimonial of many who shall stand at the right hand of the Judge, shall myself miss Christ's approval, and be set upon the left hand? There is such a beguile, and it befalleth many. What if it befall me, who have but too much art to cover my own soul and others with the flourish of ministerial, country holiness!' The next Sabbath after that on which Noah preached his last sermon on righteousness, sea monsters were already whelping and stabling in his pulpit.

There had never been such dry seasons since the memory of man. It seemed as if the whole earth would surely die of famine. All the time the ark was a-building the heavens were as brass and the earth as iron. Had Noah preached and prophesied that this terrible drought of rain would last till this generation repented of their corruptions and their violence, there would have been a perfect pentecost among them. Thousands would have turned to the Lord that very day. As it was, many was the day that the worst scoffers at the preachings were of the preacher's own household. Many was the Sabbath-day when Noah disappeared into the forest and fell on his face and prayed that he might have a sign from heaven. But still the branches broke into dust and ashes under him as he wrestled with God for even one little cloud in the

sky. And all the chapt and blasted earth around him mocked at him and at his sermons and at his threatenings of a flood of water. But all he ever got for answer to his prayer in the wood was what he already knew, and, indeed, every hour of every day called to mind: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man. Make thee an ark of gopher wood!' Till Noah, moved with fear, returned to his place and worked with all his might for another six days preparing an ark to the saving of his house. The Lord is slow to wrath; slow to a proverb and to a jest. But we have His own warning for it that His Spirit will not always strive with man. Not so much as a man's hand of cloud had been seen for weeks and for months in the west. But no sooner was the ark finished and Noah was shut in, than God arose and gave the signal. And the stormy wind that fulfils His pleasure struck the ark that moment like a park of artillery. And not the ark only, but the whole creation shook, and shuddered, and groaned, and travailed with the wrath of God. The firmament fell in sunder in the twinkling of an eye, and the waters which were below the firmament leaped up to meet the waters which were above the firmament. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

There has never been anything again on the face of this earth like that ark for the next hundred and fifty days. And there will never be anything like

it again till the day of judgment. Such was the wrath of God, and such was the horror and the suspense, the roaring of the storm without, the roaring of the brute beasts within, and the overwhelming fear. There is only one thing that outdoes that ark on this earth, and that is the heart of every regenerate man. No; that is too much to say; not of every regenerate man, but only of that man among the regenerate who has been taken deep down into the noble and saving knowledge of his own heart. With God's judgments against him and against his sin all around him; with his past sin and his present sinfulness finding him out a thousand times every day, knocking at his door, calling in at his window, dogging his steps; with his soul reeling and staggering within him like a drunken man, and with earth and hell let loose within him—that rocking, reeling, midnight ark is a predestinated picture of the soul of every deeply true and deeply exercised saint. Not of sham saints, and not of saints on the surface, but of every son and daughter of fallen Adam who is truly being made in their heart of hearts, and in the divine nature, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, the Lord All-Holy. And most of all are the hearts of God's great saints like that ark in the wild beasts that made that ark hideous to sit in, to eat and drink in, and to sleep and worship in for the next hundred and fifty days and nights. All the evil beasts that ever roared and ravened for their prey were in that ark; each one after his kind. Apes and peacocks were there also, and sparrows

and magpies; snakes also, and vipers, and adders. Dogs with their vomit, and sows with their mire. As the blessed Behmen has it about himself: A man's soul is sometimes like a wolf, sometimes like a dog, sometimes like a lion, sometimes like a serpent—subtle, venomous, and slanderous; sometimes like a toad—poisonous, and so on; till my soul, says that singularly subtle and singularly saintly man, is a cage of cruel and unclean birds. And not Behmen's soul only, but yours and mine, if we really know anything at all about the matter in hand. Those wild beasts are all there till God in His great pity opens the windows of heaven over us and says to us: O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. This is as the waters of Noah unto Me. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. This is the heritage of the Lord; and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.

How did Noah and his household occupy themselves during the whole of that long and dreary voyage? They had no chess and no cards; no old newspapers and no sensational novels. I have no idea how the rest of the family occupied themselves; but I can tell you to a certainty what Noah did. I have no books, said Jacob Behmen, but I have myself. And Noah had himself all those hundred and fifty days and nights. Himself, and Ham, and the woman who had gone down at his door with Ham's name on her drowning

lips. He had Shem also, and Japheth, and their wives, and their mother. And if all the romances that ever were written had been on board, and all the games with which men and women have murdered time since time began, do you think that Noah would have had either time or taste for them? What do you think? Do you think he would? There is no way of killing time like prayer. If you would be at the end of your longest voyage before you know where you are, walk with God on the deck of the vessel. Tell Him every day about your children. Tell Him their names. Describe their opening characters to Him. Confide to Him your fears about them. And if one of them has gone astray, or is beginning to go astray, you will have enough in him alone to keep you alone with God for, say, one hour every day. I warrant you the wettest ground under the ark was as dry as tinder before Noah's eyes were dry. They all feared to ask their father why he wept as he walked with God, for they all knew quite well that it was for them that he so walked and so wept.

'And the sons of Noah that went forth of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.' There will be plenty of men that will go forth of earth and into heaven with all Ham's evil memories, and more. But from the north pole to the south pole, and from the rising to the setting of the sun in the new heavens and the new earth, there will not be so much as one man found there with Ham's still lewd, still hard, and still impenitent heart.

VIII

HAM

AND HAM SAW HIS FATHER, AND HE TOLD HIS TWO BROTHERS WITHOUT

HERE was an old vagabond, to vice industrious, among the builders of the ark. He had for long been far too withered for anything to be called work; and he got his weekly wages just for sitting over the pots of pitch and keeping the fires burning beneath them. That old man's heart was as black as his hands. It was of him that God had said that it grieved and humbled Him at His heart that He had ever made man. The black asphalt itself was whiteness itself beside that old reprobate's heart and life. Now Ham, Noah's second son, was never away from that deep hollow out of which the preparing pitch boiled and smoked. All day down among the slime-pits, and all night out among the sultry woods—wherever you heard Ham's loud laugh, be sure that lewd old man was either singing a song there or telling a story. All the time the ark was a-building, and for long before that, Ham had been making himself vile under the old pitch-boiler's instructions and

examples. Ham's old instructor and exemplar had gone down quick to hell as soon as the ark was finished and shut in. But, by that time, Ham could walk alone. Dante came upon his old schoolmaster in hell when he was being led through hell on his way to heaven; and so did Ham when he went to his own place. But that was not yet. Ham was not vile enough yet. His day of grace had not come to an end yet. His bed in hell was not all made yet. He had more grey heads to bring down to the grave first. He had to break his old father's heart first. As he will soon now do, if you will wait a moment. Ham had been born out of due time. Ham had not been born and brought up in his true and proper place. Ham should have been born and bred in Sodom and Gomorrah. Not the ark, lifted up above the waters of the flood, but the midnight streets of the cities of the plain were Ham's proper place. The pairs of the unclean beasts that Ham attended to with his brothers were clean and chaste creatures of God compared with Ham. For Ham could neither feed those brute beasts, nor bed them, nor look at them, nor think about them without sin. More than one of those abused beasts will be brought forward at the day of judgment to bear testimony against one of their former masters. From a little boy Noah's second son had been a filthy dreamer. The best and the holiest words his father could speak had an unclean sense to his son. Every vessel in the ark and every instrument held an unclean association for Ham. Within all those steaming

walls the only truly brute beast was Noah's second son. Sensuality takes a most tremendous revenge on the sensual sinner. What an inexpiable curse is a defiled mind! Well might Bishop Andrewes pray every night of the week for all his life, and that too, with sweat and tears, that his transgressions might not be retained upon him as his punishment. It would be ill to imagine a worse punishment than an imagination steeped in sin. 'O!' cries Dr. Newman, 'the inconceivable evil of sensuality!' 'If you once begin to think about forbidden things,' says Cicero, 'you will never be able to think about anything else.'

It is not in as many words in Moses, but I have read it elsewhere, that there was a woman who clung to the door of the ark which was in the side thereof; and the woman cried and prayed. Ham! she cried. Ham, my husband! she cried. Ham, my destroyer! Preacher of righteousness! she cried, open thy door! Where is thy God? Open thy door and I will believe. Throw out thy son Ham to me, and I will take him to hell in my arms! Is there a woman within these walls, or are they all she-wolves? and she dashed her head against the shut door. Mother of Ham! Wife of Ham! Sisters of Ham! she cried. My mother's blood is on his skirts. My own blood is on his hands! Cursed be Ham! And the ark shook under her words and her blows. And Ham, Noah's second son, listened in the darkness and through the seams of pitch. And then he kneeled in prayer and in thanksgiving, and he blessed the God of his

fathers that she had gone down, and that the waters still prevailed.

Why do the sons of our preachers of righteousness so often go wrong? you will often hear it asked. I do not know that they do. But, even if they did, I would not wonder. Familiarity, and near neighbourhood, to some orders of mind, naturally breed contempt. And then, our preachers are so busy. Composing so many sermons; holding together, by hook or by crook, so many straggling congregations; fighting, now this battle and now that in church and in state; and worst of all, with all that, sitting down to write a book. As good almost kill a man as kill a good book, said a great man, who was much better at making a good book than he was at bringing up a good child. But what a bitter mockery it must be, especially to a minister, to hear his books called good on every hand and bought by the thousand, and then, soon after, to see his sons and his daughters neglected, grown up, and gone astray! To me there is one specially awful word in Bishop Andrewes' *Devotions*. Words like that word always make me hide my Andrewes out of sight. 'What a strange person Keble is! There is Law's *Serious Call*—instead of leaving it about to do people good, I see he reads it, and puts it out of the way, hiding it in a drawer.' The word I refer to may not make you hide your Andrewes out of sight. Words differ and grow awful or otherwise as the people differ who employ them. 'I have neglected Thee, O God!' That, to me, is the awful

word. We speak of parents neglecting their children. But we, your ministers, above all other men, neglect God, and that in nothing more than in the way we neglect our children. After the clean beasts and the beasts that are not clean shall have witnessed against Ham, and before Ham is taken away, he will be taken and questioned and made to tell how busy his father was, day and night, all these years, preaching righteousness and building the ark. Everybody all around knew what went on among the slime-pits by day and among the warm woods by night,—everybody but the preacher of righteousness. Ham will tell—you will all hear him telling —how his father worked, in season and out of season, at the work of God. Concerning Noah standing on His right hand the angry Judge will interrogate Ham standing on His left hand. Did My servant here, thy father, ever restrain thee from making thyself vile? Did he, or did he not? Speak to Me the truth. And Ham will swear to it, and will say before the great white throne this: My father is innocent of me, Ham will say. My father never knew me. My vileness is all my own. No man ever had a father like my father. O Noah, my father, my father! Ham will cry.

All this time, as Ham will witness, Noah knew nothing of all that we know now. Noah was as innocent of the knowledge of his second son's past life as he still is of what will come to light at the last day. And thus it was that, as soon as the preacher of righteousness stepped out of the ark, he did exactly what we could have told you he would do.

Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife, and his sons' wives with him. And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and said, While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. And now, with all that has passed, what a Noah you will surely see! Come, all you fathers who have come through trouble, and you will see here how you are to walk with a perfect heart before your house at home. What a father Noah will be, and what a husband, and what a husbandman! If we had come through a hundredth part of Noah's terrible experience; and then had found a hundredth part of Noah's grace at God's hand; we, too, would have said, As for me and my house, we shall walk with a perfect heart and shall serve the Lord. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it that I may remember My everlasting covenant. And the sons of Noah that went forth of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth; and Ham is the father of Canaan.

In his beautiful sermon on 'The World's Benefactors,' Dr Newman asks, 'Who, for example, was the first cultivator of corn? Who first tamed and domesticated the animals whose strength we use and whom we make our food? Or who first discovered the medicinal herbs which, from the earliest times, have been our resource against

disease? If it was mortal man who first looked through the animal and vegetable worlds, and discriminated between the useful and the worthless, his name is unknown to the millions whom he has benefited.' Only, Noah's name is quite well known to the millions he has benefited; as, also, to the millions he has cursed and destroyed. Corn and wine, the Bible always says. The first farmer who sowed, and reaped, and threshed, and ground, and baked corn, we do not know his name. But we have Noah's name now open before us; it was he who first planted a vineyard and manufactured its grapes into intoxicating drink. Millions every day bless the day he did it, and pledge his name for doing it; while other millions curse the day. And which of these cries goes up best before God another day will declare. Only, if you would read and remember your Bible before you eat and drink, you would know better how to eat and how to drink so as to do all to the glory of God, and against that day. And it is surely significant, with an immense and an eloquent significance, that the Bible tells us that the first vine-dresser at his first vintage was found in a state such as Ham and Shem and Japheth found their father. It would be at the time of harvest and ingathering. Or, perhaps, it was a birthday feast—the birthday feast of his first son, or it might be of his second son. Or, to make another guess where we do not know, perhaps it was the anniversary of the laying of the keel of the ark; or of the shutting-to of the door of the ark; or of the day when the tops of the

mountains were seen; or of the day when the dove came into the window of the ark with an olive-leaf in her mouth plucked off. It was certainly some such glad and exalted day as one of these. Come, my sons, said the old saint over his wine; come, let us eat and drink to-day and be merry. The fathers are full of far-fetched explanations and apologies for Noah. One will have it that, admitting the drunkenness, still Noah was all the time innocent; it was the unusually strong wine that did it. It was the too-heady wine that was alone to blame. Another will have it that Noah did not know this new drink he had stumbled on from milk. And yet another, that the whole history is a mysticism, and that the preacher of righteousness was only drunk in a figure. But the Bible does not mince matters; nor does it waste words even on Noah. In the Bible the 'saints are lowered that the world may rise.'

Now, who of all Noah's household should happen to come in at that evil moment but Ham; and he, too, flown with insolence and with his father's wine. But, blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and God from that hour shall surely enlarge Japheth. How, still, it humbles and chastens such sons as Noah's first and third sons to see their parents' imperfections—their father's faults at table, and their mother's follies everywhere. Shem's and Japheth's respect and reverence all remained. Their love for their father and their honour for him were not any less, but were much more, after the noble and beautiful service they

did him that day. Only, ever after that terrible day, with what watchfulness did those two brothers go out and come in! With what wistfulness did they look at their father as he ate and drank! With what solicitude, and with what prayer, and not for their father only, did Shem and Japheth lie down at night and rise up in the morning! It brought Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth back again to Moses' mind when he received and read and transcribed the Fifth Commandment on Mount Sinai: Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

It is easy for those who are standing on the shore to shout their counsels to those who are sinking in the sea. It is easy for those who are in cold blood to tell a man in hot blood how he should behave himself. And it is easy for us sitting here, with all our passions at our heel for the moment, to moralise over the preacher of righteousness when he awoke from his wine. At the same time, it is only by laying such sudden and ungovernable outbursts as his was to heart that we shall ever learn how to hold ourselves in when we are mad with anger at our children. I have more understanding, says the psalmist, than all my teachers; for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts. Now, if David's hot anger against Absalom or Solomon had come upon him when he was in that mind, and had he remembered ancient Noah and his

wakening from his wine, what would David have done? With the Holy Spirit not taken away from him, David would have recollected his former falls, and he would have retreated back upon his own fifty-first psalm. He would have taken Absalom, whom he so much loved, and the angry father and the exasperating son would have kneeled down together, and then David would have said, with weeping, Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity. Purge me with hyssop. Then will I teach transgressors Thy way! And Ham himself would have fallen on his father's neck, and would have said, I am not worthy to be called thy son! Fathers and mothers, when our children are overtaken again in a fault, instead of cursing them and striking at them, and casting them out of doors as Noah did, let us say to ourselves that we have only begotten our children in our own image. Let us then, for that is the best time to do it—let us take them, and go with them, and beseech God to melt them, and change them, and alter them, and make them not our sons and daughters any more, but His own. And see if He will not do it. See if He will not deliver them over again to us with these words, Take them and bring them up for Me, and I will give thee thy wages. 'If a father is intemperate,' says William Law, 'if he swears and converses foolishly with his friends, let him not wonder that his children cannot be made virtuous. For there is nothing that teaches to any purpose but our ordinary

temper, our common life and conversation; and almost all people will be such as those amongst whom they were born and bred. If a father would pray every day to God to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues? How naturally would he grow ashamed of wanting such virtues as he thought necessary for his children.'

Now, all we here are the sons and daughters of one or other of Noah's three sons. By those three men were all the nations of the earth divided after the flood. And we are the sons of Ham, if we are his sons, by this.—When every imagination of our heart is defiled. When we are in lewd company. When we have enjoyment over an unclean song, an unclean story, or an unclean newspaper report. When we steal a lewd book and take it to our room with us at night. When we hide away an impure picture in our drawer, where Keble hid the *Serious Call.* When we report our neighbour's shame. When we tell our companion not to repeat it; but when we would burst if we did not repeat it. When we rush to pen and ink to advertise abroad some fall or some fault of our brother. When we feel that we have lost something when his fault is explained, or palliated, or covered and forgotten, and when he is set on his feet again. Ham's sons and daughters have not all black hands and black faces. Many of them have their hands and their faces as white as a life of cosmetics and idleness can whiten them. While, all the time, Ham holds their

black hearts. My brethren, let us henceforth begin to be the sons and daughters of Shem and Japheth. Let us refuse to look at, or to be told about, anything that exposes, not our own father or son or brother only, but all other men's fathers, and mothers, and sons, and brothers. Let us keep our eyes shut to the sight of it, and our ears shut to the sound of it. Let us insist on looking on the best, the most blameless, and the most serviceable side of our neighbour. Let us think of Noah as a preacher of righteousness; as the builder of the ark; as elected, protected, and delivered by God; and as, with all his falls, all the time in God's sure covenant of peace, and under God's rainbow and God's oath. And when he is overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, lest thou also be tempted. Some one has called the Apostle Paul the first perfect Christian gentleman. I shall always after this think of Shem and Japheth as Paul's Old Testament forerunners in that excellent, beautiful, and noble character.

IX

NIMROD

THEREFORE IS THE NAME OF IT CALLED BABEL

NIMROD was Noah's great-grandson through Ham; and he was a mighty hunter. He was the father, as William Law has it, of all those English gentlemen who take their delight in running foxes and hares out of breath. With one drop of his ink, and with one stroke of his pen, Moses tells us a great deal about Nimrod; and, the masterly writer that he is, Moses leaves still more to our imagination. 'And Cush begat Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.' Nimrod's name, you will see, was a proverb in Israel down even to the day that Moses composed this book. Dante, also, Moses' equal in condensation and in force, lets us see that vast, vague, looming, swelling, gibbering giant in his thirty-first Inferno. His shoulders, his breast, his arms, his ribs,—Dante is amazed at the cloudy glimpse he gets of Ham's

grandson down among the gloomy pits. O senseless spirit! shouts Virgil at the giant. And then to his charge:

> Nimrod is this,
> Through whose ill-counsel in the world no more
> One tongue prevails. But pass we on, nor waste
> Our words; for so each language is to him,
> And his to others, understood by none.

Matthew Henry, still the prince of commentators for the common people, says that Nimrod, no doubt, did great good by his hunting instinct at the beginning of his career. He would put his people under deep obligation by ridding them of the wild beasts that infested those early lands. But then, as time went on, and as Nimrod's ambition grew, he would seem to have taken to hunting men instead of beasts. Great conquerors, after all, are but great hunters before the Lord. Alexander himself, the Great, as we call him, is to Daniel but a great pushing he-goat. And from that Nimrod was led on to build cities with walls, and towers, and barracks, and fortresses. Note of Nimrod's ambition, says our sagacious commentator, that it was boundless, expensive, restless, over-bold, and blasphemous.

Archbishop Whately thinks that the whole story of the building of the Tower of Babel, the confounding of the speech of the builders, and their consequent disruption and dispersion, north, south, east, and west, is a veiled history of a great outbreak of religious controversy in that early and eastern day. The archbishop does not pretend to

have discovered just what the great controversy was all about; probably the whole thing would be unintelligible to us. But, on the whole, he thinks it must have been some dispute connected with the worship of God. In 1849 there was much less freedom allowed in the Church of England for such speculations than there is in our day; and thus it was that Dr. Whately had to come out about the Tower of Babel in one of the foreign tongues of Babel, and behind the veil of anonymity. A living writer in the same church looks on the Tower of Babel as a 'sublime emblem'; and Landor makes Isaac Barrow and Isaac Newton talk together in his noble English about that Tower as if it had been, at the top at least, the first astronomical observatory of those Babylonian fathers of that queen of the sciences. But we come back from all these, not uninstructive speculations in their way, to the powerfully written passage before us, in which so much is told us in such small space. 'Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'

Philo Judæus, the father of allegorical interpretation, has a beautiful tract entitled *The Confusion of Languages*. But Jacob Behmen, Philo's Teutonic son, far outstrips his Hebrew father in the depth, pungency, directness, and boldness of his interpretations and his applications. Babel, to Philo, is the soul of man; the confounded, confused, and scattered-abroad soul of man; and in his confused and scattered treatise we stumble on not a few things that are both wise and deep and beautiful.

To Behmen, Babel is all that it is to Philo, with this characteristic addition, that Behmen's books are full of contemporaneous examples and illustrations of the Babel-like confusion that had come already to the Reformed Church of his day. Babel, to Behmen, is full of the controversies, verbal orthodoxies and heterodoxies, misunderstandings, misconstructions, and heart hatreds of the mighty hunters of his day. Babel, 'philosophically taken,' was to Philo the sum total of the passions of the soul let loose on the individual; evangelically taken, to Behmen, Babel was all those passions let loose also on the body of Christ. It is not easy and plain for any one of us to put our finger on our own Babel, says Behmen. For we are all working at the building of that Tower: we are all too much given over to words and to names, to sects and to parties, to men and to churches. Words rule us, and things lose all power over us. Names master us and tyrannise over us. Let every man enter into himself, and he will be sure to find a whole Tower of Babel, with all its consequences, standing in his own mind and in his own heart continually. The only possible escape from that Tower and its confoundings and confusions is to get clean away from the letter which killeth, and to go down into the spirit which giveth liberty and life. Leave off all disputations and all divisive words and names, and begin thy life again with God and with love alone. As Paul was not to be absolutely ignorant of everything but Christ and Him crucified all the time that he was to know nothing else, so Behmen is not to deny, or forswear,

or for ever forget the Lutheran catechisms and confessions of his day; only, he is to go beneath them all to the ground out of which they all spring, and above them all to the light and the air in which they all live and grow. And then he hopes to return to them with a love and a light and a life and a freedom that verbal Babel knows nothing of. Arguments, controversies, debates, disputes, even when they are true and needful, have always something of Babel in them; and they who must engage in them will have need of another and a better life outside of them, beneath them, and above them, as Jacob Behmen had.

And thus to come home, and to take current controversy among ourselves: political, religious, and, indeed, all kinds of controversy; if you will look well to it you will soon see why the name of it all is to be called Babel. All true moralists, all true logicians, all true teachers of rhetoric, unite to tell us and to testify to us that we all deceive and damage both ourselves and our neighbours and the truth every day by our words; by our misuse and our abuse of words. Words, indeed, are both the instrument and the vehicle of all thought and all intercourse. We cannot think, any more than we can speak or write, without words. But, unless we are early and well-taught, and unless we continually watch and teach ourselves, we shall become the complete slaves of our own instruments, and our carriages shall run away with us continually. 'Words are wise men's counters; wise men do but reckon by them; but they are the money of fools.' To prove that and to

illustrate that, I had collected and arranged a table of wise men's counters and fools' moneys, and had intended to take in that table here. But I have departed from that intention. I have departed from that intention lest some of you should go off upon a word, and leave the proper and full lesson unlearned. It will be far better that each man who is intent on his own deliverance and improvement, should make up such a table of political, theological, scientific, and social controversialisms for himself, and out of his own conversation, and should, as Socrates would have taught him, ask himself, cross-question himself even, as to what he means by them when he uses them. Let us get into the truly intellectual, truly moral, and truly religious habit of asking ourselves, and insisting on an answer from ourselves, What is that name, nickname, by-word, that I am casting abroad about my brother so loudly and so loosely? What is the original root of it in language, and in me? What does it connote, as the schools say, first in my own mind, and then in its true content, and then in my hearer's or reader's capacity? Is it fair to use such a name and nickname? Is it just? Is it true? Would I like such and such names and nicknames to be attached to me by those who are opposed to me? It is very annoying, and, indeed, exasperating, to be pulled up in that way when our eloquence and our indignation and our denunciation are in full flood. But truth, love, goodness, godliness, are to be achieved by no man on any easier terms. As Behmen would say, Babel is to be escaped in no other way. And, since

Behmen is so full and so good, as I think, on Babel, and since he himself has been so much the victim of Babel—more almost than any man I know—let me show you once more the kind of thing that has made me love him: and, almost to say of him, as Dr. Newman says of Thomas Scott, that he owes him his own soul. I do not owe my soul to Behmen, or to any of his school; but I owe some lessons in my soul's deliverance and purification that I would be a cold-hearted creature if I did not on all hands acknowledge and share with you. A true Christian, says Teutonicus in his *Regeneration*, a Christian who is born anew into the Spirit of Christ, has less and less mind to contend and strive about matters of religion. He has enough to do within himself. A true Christian is really of no church. He can dwell surrounded by all the churches. He can even enter them all, and take part in all their services, without being bound up with any one of them. He has but one creed, which is, Christ in him. If men would but as fervently seek after love and righteousness as they do after disputatious matters, we should soon all be the children of one Father; and there would be no matters left to dispute about. If we did not know half so many contrary doctrines, and were more like little children; if we only had more good-will to those who hold the contrary doctrine, the contrariness would soon give way, and we would all be of one mind. Ungodly ministers go about sowing abroad contentions, reproaches, misconstructions; and, then, ungodly people catch all these up

and make an ungodly religion out of them, and bring forth fruit accordingly. They despise, revile, slander, and misrepresent one another, till Babel, and all its sins and miseries, is again falling on us and burying us. What, asks Freher at himself and at the Spirit of his Master—what is an honest, simple Christian to do amidst such a variety of sects and contentions? He is to keep out of them; and he is to thank God that he has neither the call, nor the talent, nor the temptation to enter into them. He is to keep his heart clean and sweet to all men, and hot and bitter only at himself. No man's persuasion justifies me in hating him. And if I hate his persuasion too much, if I give up too much of my passion to hating any man's persuasion, I will soon end in hating himself. I must hate that only which hinders me myself from being a new creature in Christ Jesus. Therefore is the name of all controversy called Babel by the great mystics, the great masters of the life of love in the soul.

X

TERAH

AND TERAH TOOK ABRAM HIS SON TO GO INTO THE LAND OF CANAAN

THE first Jew was a Gentile. The first Hebrew was a heathen. The father of the faithful himself was, to begin with, a child of wrath even as others. To no man on the face of the earth had it been said as yet that to him and to his seed pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. Why, we may well wonder, why was the covenant of life so long in coming in, and in taking effect? Why,—since God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,—why were all the families of the earth not embraced in the covenant of life at once? Why was that new covenant not made with Adam, the father of us all? There would surely have been a fine fitness had Adam been our father in the covenant of grace as well as in the covenant of works. Now, why was he not? It may have been because he had made such a fatal breakdown in his first covenant. Or, it may have been because

he had never taken that tremendous breakdown sufficiently home to heart. Neither the greatest sanctity nor the greatest service is forfeited by the truly and sufficiently penitent man. And it must surely have been that Adam lost the fatherhood of all penitent, believing, and holy men by the lack of depth and intensity and endurance in his repentance. Abel, Adam's second son, would have made a most excellent covenant-head. And, almost to a certainty, we, to-day, would have been called the children of faithful and acceptable Abel but for his brother's envy, and but for that foul and fatal blow in the field. Enoch, in the lack of Abel, would have made a model Abraham. How Enoch would have walked with God in Ur of the Chaldees, and in Haran, and in Canaan, and in Egypt, and back again in Canaan, confessing, all the time, that he was a stranger and a pilgrim with God on the earth! How Enoch would have told and would have taught his children after him that without faith it is impossible to please God! How he would have gone before them and shown them the way to come to God, believing that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him! But the divine will was in a strait betwixt two in Enoch's case. Enoch was sorely needed on earth, indeed; but his own desire to depart, taken together with God's desire to have Enoch with Him, carried the day; which carriage, for Enoch, at any rate, was far better. Noah, we would have boldly said, was expressly made for the faithful place, and the place for him. For by faith Noah, being warned

of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. And then, Noah was a preacher of righteousness to boot. But, instead of the faithful, Noah lived to become the father of all those who drown all their covenants of faith and of works alike, both with God and with man, in the wine-fat. All this time, then, all this disappointed and postponed time, the angel of the covenant had been passing unceasingly from land to land, and from nation to nation, and from tongue to tongue seeking for some of Adam's sons who should be found worthy to take up the calling and election of God; till, at last, the star came and stood over the house of Terah, on the other side of the flood. Now, this Terah, in his inherited and invincible ignorance, served other gods, and he had brought up Abram, his so devout son, to the same service. But those two Gentile men, father and son, served their Gentile gods with such truly Jewish service that God was constrained to wink at their unwilling ignorance. The God of all grace graciously accepted Terah and Abram for their love and for their obedience to the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And thus it was that the true God raised up Abram the son of Terah, that righteous man from the east, and called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings. And thus it was also that Abram's second greatest son put Abram his father into his great catholic sermon on

Mars hill, and said this about Abram: God, he said, that made the world, hath made of one blood all nations of men, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being; for we also are His offspring. To Him that hath shall be given, is an absolute and a universal law and rule with the God of righteousness. And thus it was that He said to Abram, the son of Terah, in Ur of the Chaldees: Well done, good and faithful servant. Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee.

It would have been entirely true to nature, and it would have been a most beautiful and a very fine lesson to all the families of the earth, had the divine call come to Terah, the father, and had Terah taken Abram, and had the son set out with the father to go together to the land of promise. But it is above and beyond nature, and it is a still nobler and a still more sublime sight, to see the call coming to the son, and then to see the father submitting himself to that call; entirely and immediately accepting it; and setting out under his chosen son to act upon that call and to follow it out. I can easily imagine a thousand suspicions, and rebukes, and remonstrances, and threatenings that Terah might have addressed to his son Abram when he first communicated the vision and the voice to his Chaldean father. It would be no imagination to repeat to

you some of Terah's refusals, and remonstrances, and indictments, and protestations, and punishments. We have heard them, or the like of them, a thousand times. We have heard them as often as the same heaven opened and the same voice spoke to the young intellectual and spiritual emigrants of our New Testament day. But not one word of such stagnation, stubborn, unbelieving speeches came out of the mouth of Abram's noble father. Far from that. Nay, I know not that we would ever have had Abram, or would ever have heard his name, unless his humble-hearted, youthful-hearted, brave-hearted and believing-hearted old father had taken his chosen son by the hand, and his chosen son's wife, and had said, Yes, my son Abram, and my daughter Sarai, yes, let us set out at once for the land of Canaan. Why Terah himself was not taken, and himself made the father of the faithful, we do not know; unless it was that he was to stand at the head of human history in a still nobler father-hood and a still more honourable office. That is to say, to be the patron patriarch and first father of all humble-minded, open-minded, free-minded, and hospitable-minded old men all the world over. Yes, that was it. Terah was taken in Ur of the Chaldees, and was there made the type and the teacher of all those wise men of the east, and of the west, and of the north, and of the south: all the elect within the election, and without: all those men old in years, but whose eye is not dim, nor their intellectual nor their spiritual strength one iota abated. Terah is the Magian father of all those sweet, wise,

beautiful souls who stand rooted in a green and genial old age: all those in whom, though their outward man may perish, yet their inward man is renewed day by day. Terah, the father of Abram, is at the same time the father of all those statesmen, and churchmen, and theologians, and philosophers, as well as of all those many plain men among us, who to old age are still open to all divine visions and to all divine voices; to all new truth and to all new light; to all new departures in divine providence and in divine progress, and then to all new opportunities and all new duties. They are all Abram's brethren, and they all take of Terah, his father. All they whose living faith in the ever-living God is such that they see and feel His heavenly life still quickening all existence, and His heavenly light still lighting all men in His living word, in His living church, in His living providences, and in the living souls of all His children. A teachable, tractable, pliable son is a fine sight to see, and such a son is the best blessing that any good father can have of God. But a still teachable, tractable, pliable-minded, genial-minded, hopeful-minded father is a still finer sight to see; a still rarer, nobler, and even more delightful sight to see. A father who reads his reading son's best books, and who sits at the feet of his student son's best teachers, and who walks arm in arm with his elect son away out of the worn-out past and away up into the land of promise—that is a father to descend from, and to be proud of above peers and princes. A father who unites a large and a sage experience

to a free spirit of expectation, and enterprise, and hope, and steadfast faith, and full assurance. And, thank God, at every new vision and at every new voice of His we ever find such sons of Terah in the church and in the state, in the congregation and in the family, and a right honourable place they fill, and a right fruitful. Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee. And Terah took Abram his son and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and he went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan. Let all our old and venerable men continue to take Terah for their first father till their flesh is given back to them like the flesh of a little child, and till their youth is renewed like the eagle's.

As it turned out, then, it was neither Adam, nor Abel, nor Enoch, nor Noah, nor Terah, but it was Abram, Terah's choicest son, who was installed of God into the fatherhood of all foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified men. But, with all his excellent natural qualities and abilities, and with all that Terah could teach his son,—and then, to crown all, when he took his staff in his hand and walked out of Ur not knowing whither he went,—with all that parental instruction and example, Abram still had, himself, great things both to undergo and to perform before he was ready to be made the father of a faithful seed. A great bereavement, a great disappointment, a great temptation, a great transgression, a great humiliation, and a great surrender of his rights—

all these great experiences, and more than all these, had to be passed through, and their full fruits had to be reaped up into Abram's heart and life and character, before Abram could be trusted, could be counted on, as the foundation stone of the Old Testament Church; and before the patriarchs, and prophets, and psalmists, and kings of Israel could be built up upon him. I am the Almighty God; walk before Me and be thou perfect. But, like his far-off Son, Abram had first to be made perfect through suffering. And Abram's first baptism of suffering was not so much the leaving of his father-land; it was much more the death of Terah his father and his fellow-traveller. Plato says that there is always a little child hidden away deep down in the very oldest man's heart. And Abram's heart was just the heart to have hidden away deep down in it Terah's little child. And that little child awoke in Abram's heart, and filled the tent and the camp with its cries and with its tears when Terah too soon gave up the ghost in Haran. As long as Abram had his father beside him and before him, faith, and love, and hope, and obedience were all easy to Abram. With a father like Terah to talk to, to pray and to praise with, and to walk arm in arm with at the head of the emigrant household, Abram's face shone like the sun as he turned his back on the land of his nativity. All that Abram really cared for came out of Chaldea with him. Terah, his venerable father; Sarai, his beautiful sister-wife; and Lot, his managing nephew; and under Lot's charge all his flocks and herds; and,

above all, with this new, amazing, divine hope and secret in his heart—with all that with him Abram walked with God, and was already perfect. But the sudden death of Terah made that happy Chaldean company to come to a standstill in Haran. It made Abram stand still. It changed the whole world to Abram. Abram's believing heart was absolutely buried in his believing father's grave in Haran. But such was the depth, and the sincerity, and the true piety of Abram's mourning for his father, that, by the time that the days of his mourning were accomplished, Abram's first faith in God had come back again to his dead heart. The call of God sounded more and more commanding in his mourning heart; till the promise became, even more than at the beginning, both a staff of God in his hand and a cordial of God in his heart. As a great psalmist-son of his sang of himself in after days in Israel—when Abram's father and mother forsook him, then the Lord took him up. All the same, the whole after way from Haran to Shechem was often a solitary and a steep way to Abram: a dim, a headless, and a leaderless way to Terah's pious and childlike son. At the same time, when Terah died in Haran, and when Abram took the old man's death to heart with such grief, with such resignation, with such an assured reliance upon the divine promise, and with such full assurance of God's grace, and truth, and power, and faithfulness, a great step was taken both to the land of promise, and to Abram's predestination as the father of all faithful men.

Abram's great bereavement was immediately followed by a great disappointment. The Lord thy God, so sang the call and the promise in Abram's hopeful heart—The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. But no sooner had Abram begun to build an altar at Bethel; no sooner had he begun to lengthen his cords and to strengthen his stakes, than a terrible famine of all these things fell on the whole land. Till Lot only put words upon the terrible darkness that fell on Abram's overwhelmed heart when he upbraided Abram, and said, Would God we also had died in Haran! Would God we had listened to our kinsmen in Chaldea when they dissuaded us from this folly and from this wilderness! The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace the dung-hill. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold to us. We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria that we may have bread. No wonder that after such a sudden collapse of hope as that, Abram's faith completely gave way for a season. Sarai was all that Abram now had. She was the wife of his youth. She had come with him

and she had stood beside him in all his losses and disappointments; and if he should lose Sarai in Egypt everything was lost. Say, I pray thee, that thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee. And Sarai was as weak as her husband was, and she fell into the same snare of unbelieving fear. Till the end of that sad business was that the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And till Pharaoh called Abram and bitterly rebuked him. Were you ever bitterly rebuked for your sin by some one far beneath you in age, in knowledge, in experience, and in the calling and the grace of God? Did you ever taste that bitterest of all galls of seeing innocent men and women plagued for your sin? Then you will understand better than even Moses could tell you, what Abram felt as he saw the unoffending king of Egypt struck with plagues for Abram's falsehood and for Abram's deceit. It is not told in Moses, but I can well believe it, that nothing that ever happened to Abram so hastened forward his humility, his detachment from this world, and his heavenly-mindedness, as his fall in Egypt, and all its consequences to Pharaoh and to Pharaoh's household. What is this that thou hast done to me? Those who have these accusing words sounding in their ears from the reproaches of innocent and injured people, they will be shut up like their father Abram to that grace of which God so timeously and so fitly spake to Abram when He said to him: Fear not, Abram, for I am thy shield and thy salvation.

Jonathan Edwards, one of the purest and princeliest souls that ever were made perfect through suffering, has told all that fear God what God did for his soul. In intellect Edwards was one of the very greatest of the sons of men, and in holiness he was a seraph rather than a man. And to have from such a saint, and in his own words, what God from time to time did for his so exercised soul is a great gift to us out of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Well, Edwards testifies to the grace of God that immediately after every new season of great distress, great mortification, great humiliation, great self-discovery, and great contrition, there was always given him a corresponding period of great liberty, great enlargement, great detachment, great sweetness, great beauty, and great and ineffable delight. Till he testifies to all who fear God, and challenges us out of Hosea, saying to us: Come, let us return to the Lord our God: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. And so was it with Edwards's first father in his re-migration out of Egypt back to Canaan. But if Pharaoh was sore plagued because of Abram's transgressions, then Lot, at any rate, had his advantage out of all that. As our magnificent New Testament commentary on the Old Testament has it, Abram came out of his trespass in Egypt more than ever a stranger and a pilgrim with God on the earth. He came back to Canaan very rich in cattle, in silver, and in

gold. But, like all his mortified sons, his heart was no more in his riches. God makes men rich who do not care for riches, and He brings to poverty those who like Lot sell their souls for sheep and oxen. He hath filled, sang Mary, the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away. Abram was filled with good things as he came back to Canaan, which had now recovered from her famine. As full as he could hold, and more. But Abram's heart was less and less in his cattle pens and in his money bags; and more and more his heart was in those promises that are never received in this life, but are kept for us in that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. In former days, in the days before Haran and Bethel, and especially in the days before Egypt, if the land had not been able to bear both Abram and Lot, Abram would have said to Lot, I will journey east to Jordan, where it is well watered like the garden of the Lord, and the rest of the land thou canst take after I have left it. But after Egypt, and all the other times and places that Abram has come through, he has no heart left for any such choice or any such contention about cattle and sheep, and corn and wine. Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, for we be brethren. In Edwards's experience, Abram's mortifications and humiliations in Egypt and elsewhere had resulted in an amazing elevation, detachment, supremeness, and sweetness of soul. Till, without knowing it, on the heights above Bethel, Abram was made the father of Him who sat on those same

heights long afterwards, and, remembering Abram, opened His mouth and taught His disciples, saying: Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

And now, as Terah and Abram were in all that, so are all their true children. We also are continually being called to go out, not knowing whither we go. We also are sojourners in a strange land. We also die in faith, not having received the promises. We also desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. And, O! how well it is with us if God is not ashamed to be called our God, and if He has prepared for us a city! Like Abram in Ur, we are the sons of a father who hears our call, and who takes us by the hand and leads us on the way. Or it is otherwise, just as God in His deep wisdom and love wills it to be. But, fatherful or fatherless; with Terah for our father, or with God alone; still His call comes to us all to arise and come out with Him to a land that He will show us. Arise, He says to us, and go forward in faith, in obedience, in trust, and in a sure hope. The very progress of the years, were it nothing else, would be a continually renewed call to go forward, and to walk henceforth with God. From childhood, ere ever we are aware, we have migrated into youth. From youth we are soon ushered into manhood, and from one stage of manhood on into another; till, if we have God's blessing on us, we become old like

Terah, with our eye not dim, nor our strength abated. Youth, man, married man, father, master, citizen, and so on. Maid, wife, mother, mistress, widow indeed, and so on. Migrating from one field of human life into another, and never leaving one field till we have reaped in its full harvest, and never entering upon a new field till we are prepared to plough it, and sow it, and reap it,—what a noble life we are called to lead on this earth, and all the time the pilgrims of God, and preparing ourselves for His city! What a noble education did divine providence pass Terah's son through, and with what profit to his mind, and heart, and temper, and whole moral character. His childhood spent in ancient Chaldea; his very crossing of the flood Euphrates on such an errand; the snows of Lebanon; the oaks of Bashan; Damascus; Salem; the Nile; the pyramids; the great temples; the famous schools and schoolmasters of Egypt, at whose feet Moses was to sit in after days,—all that, and much more that we neither know nor can imagine. What a noble education Terah's son was passed through of God. But not half so noble, not half so wonderful, not half so fruitful as our own. What were Babylon, and Nineveh, and Damascus, and Salem, and all Egypt, to this western world and to this nineteenth century after Christ! What were all the science of Chaldea, and all the lore of Egypt, but the merest rudiments and first elements of that splendid sunshine of all manner of truth and opportunity which floods around us from our youth up! And as we are led on from school to school; and from author

to author; and from preacher to preacher; and from one stage of intellectual and spiritual migration and growth to another; to what a stature, to what a breadth, and to what a height of faith, and knowledge, and love, and all manner of grace and truth may we not attain. Let us be up and doing. Let us open our eyes. Let us open our ears. Let us open our hearts. For thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

XI

ABRAHAM

ABRAHAM MY FRIEND

I DID not know before that God had ever needed a friend. I did not know, I could not have believed, that any mortal man could possibly have befriended Almighty God. I need a friend. I need companionship. I need advice and counsel and correction. I need to be cheered and comforted. I often feel lonely. I often despond. I often miss my way in life. I often commit myself to rash, ill-considered, and irretrievable steps. I often hurt both myself and other men with me. And, therefore, I need near me a faithful friend. A friend to speak to me in time, and with wisdom, and with both sympathy and encouragement. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Faithful are the wounds of such a friend. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. Iron sharpeneth iron: and so doth a man sharpen the countenance of his friend. Bacon needed a friend. The principal fruit of friendship

is the ease and discharge of the fulness of the heart. You may take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart but a true friend—a true friend to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it. And our own Edward Irving, a great student of Bacon, often sorely needed a wise friend, as we see in his sad life and read in his superb sermons. The great office of a friend is to try our thoughts by the measure of his judgments; to task the wholesomeness of our designs and purposes by the feelings of his heart; to protect us from the solitary and selfish part of our nature; to speak to and to call out those finer and better parts of our nature which the customs of this world stifle; and to open up to us a career worthy of our powers. 'Now,' adds the most eloquent of all our Presbyterian preachers, 'as every man hath these four attributes—infirmity of judgment, selfishness of disposition, inactivity and inertness of nature, and adversity of fortune,—so every man needeth the help of a friend, and should do his endeavour to get one.' For all these four attributes Solomon needed a friend, and Bacon, and Irving, and you, and I,—but, surely, not God. And yet it stands written out in more scriptures than one that Almighty God endeavoured to get a true friend in Abraham, and got one.

Now, of no mortal man but of Abraham alone does Almighty God ever speak and say, He was My friend. God employs many gracious, beautiful, and

endearing names in speaking of the patriarchs, and prophets, and psalmists, and other saints of His in Israel; but it is of Abraham alone that God testifies to Israel and says, Thou art the seed of Abraham, My friend. Now, I wonder if we can get at what was in the Divine Mind, and at what He put into the prophet's mind in that so remarkable and unparalleled expression. Can we put our finger on anything in Abraham's life and say, Here, and here, and here, that wonderful man proved himself to be the friend of God? We have only a few short chapters to cover the long life of Abraham. I wonder shall we find enough in those chapters to satisfy us why Isaiah, and James, and then why both Jew and Mussulman and Christian, all unite in calling Abraham what they call no other man—the friend of God? Let us try.

Well then, we see this, to begin with, that God appeared and asked of Abram a service; a kind of service, and an amount and a degree of service, that He has never needed to ask the like of it again of any other man, if we except the Man Christ Jesus. God had for long—from the fall—been looking out for some man with mind enough and with heart enough to be made the father and the founder of a family into which He could send His Son. God promised His Son to Adam and Eve; but generations and generations had to pass before the fulness of time came. And all those successive generations had to be filled with all that with which our Bible is filled from Genesis to the Gospels. And the foundations of all that had first

to be laid in some elect, called, believing, obedient, godly-minded, heavenly-minded man. Only, where was the man to be found who had all the qualifications needful for this supreme post? The long-looked-for man was found at last in Abram, Terah's choice son, in Ur of the Chaldees. To Terah's son, first of all good men on the face of the earth, was God able to say, Get thee out of thy kindred; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And Abram believed God. Abram believed God with such a depth, and with such a strength, and with such a promptitude, and with such a perseverance that by Abram's faith the foundations of the whole Church of God on earth and in heaven were laid in him. No doubt, the beginning and the middle and the end of that friendship was all in God. No doubt, Abram would have protested against, and would have repudiated the name of friend of God with fear and with shame. But that does not alter the fact. It is still God's way to impute to us what He does for us: and to reward us for what we let Him do in us. God works in us both to will and to do; but, at the same time, He holds that we work out our own salvation. And so it was in the beginning of His ways with Abraham. God chose Abraham, and called him, and blessed him. But at the same time, God always has made much of the fact that Abraham had the mind and the heart to do what he did both for God and for all the families of the earth. And that immense venture of faith and of love on the part of Abraham, to call it a venture, was so

original, so unheard of, and so full of all the great qualities of a godly heart and a heavenly life, that Abraham has ever since been called, not only the father of the faithful, but also the foremost and topmost friend of God. You understand, then, and will take home the lesson. Abraham had the heart to choose, and to prefer, and to venture for God, and for the will and the call of God, before everything else in this world. Abraham immediately, unquestioningly, cheerfully, joyfully arose and went out to do and to be all that God had asked him to do and had promised him to be. Till, as Butler has it, God justified Abraham's taste, and supported his cause, and acknowledged and claimed him as His friend: him, and his seed after him.

Edward Irving says that it is part of the office and service of a true friend to call out, and to prepare a scope for those finer feelings of the heart which are chilled and driven back upon the heart in this cold, distrustful, selfish world. Now, if that is true, and if God's heart and our hearts are in the same image in that also; if His heart also is chilled and shut up within itself in this same selfish world; then Abraham's so pressing intercession for Sodom was the part of a true friend to God. Humanly speaking, Sodom and Gomorrah would have been destroyed, and God's heart which was so full of answer to intercessory prayer would never have been discovered, had it not been for Abraham's so friendly part performed that day both to God and to the doomed cities of the plain. And while

Abraham was seeking first his own ends and the ends of the two cities in his persevering prayer, he was at the same time without knowing it serving God's greatest ends still more. For God's greatest ends always are that His great Name may be known; His great grace helped down and experienced; and His great heart drawn out to all its depth; and that, too, by persevering and importunate prayer. You are a good man's best friend when you provide him with, and press upon him, opportunity upon opportunity of doing good. And Abraham was the opportune and importunate friend of the Hearer of Prayer when he said, Peradventure, and peradventure, and peradventure, and peradventure, and again, peradventure, and when God in friendly answer reduced the price of Sodom from fifty righteous men to ten. And the Lord went His way as soon as He had left communing with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Honest Joseph Hall counts up ten trials of Abraham's faith and friendship through which God saw good to pass His friend. And the last of the ten was more terrible to Abraham than all the rest taken together. If any of you is a father, and has a son of your old age; a son of much faith and of much prayer on your part, and of much pure miracle on God's part; then add to that, that your only son is the one and only instrument and chosen vessel of all God's remaining promises to you: and then, that he lies at the point of death. I do not add that he is to die under your hand like Isaac. I only add that he is to die with your

consent and surrender and approval. If any of you that is a father or a mother has, or has had, a child like that, then you are the seed of Abraham, the friend of God. For, how you lay all night on the earth before God. How you would neither eat bread nor drink water. How you pleaded and promised and protested; how you vowed and swore and despaired. Then you will know something of how God did tempt Abraham. I do not understand this dark dispensation of God—all the seed of Abraham are often compelled to say. All is dark as midnight to me. Why should my dear, pure, inoffensive, so indispensable, and so promising son be taken away from me in the bloom of his beautiful youth? But God knows. God gave him, and it is God's place to take him when He pleases. I do not understand it. But God's understanding is infinite and unfathomable, and He does nothing of caprice, or of arrogance, or of hard-heartedness, or of oversight, or of neglect. And, when I come to myself, and think of it, if I had ten sons, and all of them were Isaacs, I would build the ten altars with my own hand. In His will is my tranquillity of mind, and my strength of heart, and my submission, and my obedience—so all Abraham's seed are called on and are enabled to say.

Abraham withheld not Isaac from his Friend on one of the mountains of Moriah; and in the same country, two thousand years after, God was not to be outdone by Abraham in the seal of His friendship to Abraham and to his seed for ever. And the bare mention of that brings God, and His friend-

ship to us and our friendship to Him, two thousand miles nearer us and two thousand miles more possible to us than Abraham's too splendid faith and too wonderful love. With all that has been said I have difficulty in believing what has been said. No; not exactly in believing it, but in what we call realising it. For all that we have read and heard in Abraham's history,—that any mortal man should be able to befriend Almighty God, still remains a very startling thing to say about Almighty God. But not about Jesus Christ. We could have befriended Him ourselves. And I think, nay, I feel sure, we would have done it too. Multitudes of men and women who were as weak and as evil and as unbelieving as we are, will be led out at the last day to receive the thanks of the Father because they befriended His friendless Son. The women of Galilee who ministered to Him of their substance will be brought forward; Martha will be brought forward, and the woman at the well; the owner of the ass's colt, and the owner of the upper room, and the owner of Gethsemane; Simon the Cyrenian also, who helped Him to carry His cross; the soldier also who gave Him some of his vinegar to drink; and Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and the women with their spices, and the angel who rolled away the stone. O!—you start up and exclaim: O! if my lot had only been cast in Galilee, or in Samaria, or in Judea, or in Jerusalem! O! you cry, how you envy the men and the women to whom the Father will say, Inasmuch as ye did it to Him, ye did it to Me! But, as you still cry that, this scripture comes

up into my mind. You will remember it when I repeat it: 'Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' And again: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And again, in the same kind: 'Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends.' And then, to His Father, this: 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.' Well then, we do not need, we have no temptation now, to challenge the wisdom and the love that cast our lot two thousand years after Christ; as the same wisdom and love cast Abraham's lot two thousand years before Christ. Abraham believed the word of the Lord in his day; and if we believe in our day through the word of the disciples, then are we Abraham's seed, and need envy neither Abraham our father nor any of our brethren. Abraham laid down his life and the life of Isaac at the call of God. And Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of Abraham, laid down His life at the same call. But our call, our first call, is not yet to lay down our life, but to take Him as our Friend who has laid down His life for ours. Now, what do you all say to that? Are you His friends on that footing? A friend gives full scope to his friend's love and goodness. Have you given Jesus Christ full scope to His life and death for you? Has this Man laid down His life for you? He has, if you have ever asked Him to do it. He has, if you have ever come up to His cross and said over Him, He gave Himself here for me. He has, if you have ever said, I

lay my sin and my death on Jesus Christ. Did it ever come to this terrible pass with you, your life or His? And how did that terrible pass end? When was it? Where was it? How long ago was it? When did it take place last? Has it taken place to-day? Is it taking place every day? Then you need envy neither Abraham nor any other man. Your day is the best of days for you. Your call is the best of calls for you. And you will be brought forward among the very first and the very best as that sinner who has adorned the doctrines of the death of Christ, and of the heart of God to sinners, as no other sinner has done from Abraham's day to the day of judgment. Does that amazing Man still stand offering me His death for me, and His living and everlasting friendship to boot? Then, this moment; then, in this house, and on the spot, I am His friend, and He is my friend.

All that is most commendable to speak, and most consoling to hear. It is very blessed to speak and to hear about Christ and His friendship to death in the sanctuary to-night; but it will all die out of our hearts in the shop, in the office, in the kitchen, in the drawing-room, and in the dining-room to-morrow. So it will. But, then, that is not all that our Lord says about how we are to make friends with Him, and to keep up that friendship. He is very practical and matter-of-fact in His friendship. 'Ye are My friends,' he goes on to say, 'if ye do whatsoever I command you.' Well then, take the

thing by that handle. Try that door. Strike up, and keep up, the friendship on that plain, pedestrian footing. You cannot attain to His cross, you complain. His blood is too remote, too transcendental, too, somehow, spiritual, and too altogether heavenly for you. I wonder at you. But let that pass. Try this commonplace way. Do this and that which He commands you to do, and you will be as much—ay, and more, His friend than if you preached and prayed and praised His blood and righteousness day and night, and did nothing else. Do this for one thing that He so pointedly commands. Shut your door to-night. And if you have no door to call your own, yet you have a heart with doors. Enter your heart, then, and pray to your Father, whose true temple is the praying man's heart. And see if He does not one day tell all the world who took His Son in earnest, and who did not. O, how easy on that footing is the friendship of God! O, how impossible it is to get past it! And then, do this to-morrow—to-morrow when the lights shall all be out in the church, and when the preacher's voice shall be silent, and when the Chaldeas and the Sodoms and the Egypts of this world shall have all men's choices and friendships—do this. God has the day prepared, and has filled it full for this purpose. All to-morrow love your enemies, and your rivals—that is to say, try to do it. Work at it. Enter into the strait gate of it. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them, and to their wives and children,

who hate you, with, or without cause. Ye are My friends, says the Son of God, if ye do that. Then, again, if you are a father with a sick son, or a son in a sudden accident; or a son who has not succeeded at school, or at college, or in life; or a son who has brought grey hairs here and there upon you, till all men mark it. How you deal with that son of yours will prove, or will disprove, you a friend of God as much and as surely as if your name had been Abraham, and your son's name Isaac. Or, if God needs you or your son to go abroad on any mission of His, as He needed Abraham, then go. Be like noble old Terah, go half the way with your elect and expatriated son, till God arises out of His place and comes to meet you, and says to you—As sure as I live, all the land on which thou standest will I give to thee and to thy seed with thee, because thou hast not withheld thyself or thy son from Me. Or, if it is this. If there is a famine of bread and water where corn and wine had been promised and expected; or if the laughters and the shouts of baptized children are silent where they would have been as the voices of God's angels to you, —what then? Then thy God will descend into thine heart, and He will ask: Am I not more to thee than sons and daughters? Is My love not better to thee than corn and wine? Am I, and My salvation, and that city of Mine which hath foundations, not more to be desired by thee than all else that I could give thee? Till you will find it in your bereaved and broken heart

to say to Him henceforth and continually, Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

XII

LOT

GOD DELIVERED JUST LOT

E are still away up among the fathers and the founders of the great families of mankind. Terah was the father of all those old men among us whose day is not done, nor their eye dim, nor their natural force abated. Abraham was the father of the faithful. And Lot, his nephew, was the father of all such as are scarcely saved. Lot began his religious life very early in life, and he began it very well. Lot was singularly happy in having a grandfather like Terah, and an uncle like Abraham. And Lot himself must have had something very good about him to begin with, when he left all his youthful associates, both young men and young women, and set out he knew not whither. Only, the two best men on earth—they knew. They were going out of Chaldea; and if they would let him Lot would go with them. Now that same is all the religion that many of our own young men have still. And, in a way, and for some men, it is quite enough to begin with. All men are not gifted as Abraham was gifted. All men are not

called as Abraham was called. All men are not made to lead. All men are not fitted to be explorers and pioneers in morals or in religion, any more than in science, or in art, or in business, or in public life. There are great, and powerful, and original, and epoch-making men; and then there are men who follow those great men, and who fill up what they find out and set agoing. And the most part of our young men cannot do a wiser or a better thing for a long time to come than just to follow their fathers and their other forerunners like Terah and Abraham. Had Lot just held on as he began; had he kept close to Abraham, and had he been content to share Abraham's prospects and prosperity and peace, Lot would have lived a pure and a happy life; he would have escaped many sorrows, and, instead of being scarcely saved; saved indeed, but saved with the fire and brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah smouldering in his skirts; he would have gone down to a truly patriarchal grave, an elder of a good report and a father of a blameless name. All went well enough with Lot as long as he had the good sense, and the good feeling, and the good manners to know his proper place and to keep it. He left Chaldea and came to Haran with the Abrahamic emigration. He held a grandson's cord at Terah's grave, and he received his share of Terah's testament. When Abraham rose up and left Haran and entered the land of promise Lot went all the way with him. Wherever Abraham went, Lot went. Where Abraham built an altar, Lot either offered at that altar or he built another

like it for himself. When the Lord spoke to Abraham, the uncle never hid from the nephew any word of the Lord that could either guide him in his behaviour or confirm him in his pilgrimage. When the terrible famine fell on Canaan, Abraham took Lot down to Egypt with him; and after the famine passed off, Lot returned to the land of promise with his chastened uncle.

I am not sure that Egypt had not been a sore temptation to Lot as well as to Abraham. Nay, I am quite sure, when I think of it, that it must have been. Mean-minded men, sordid-minded men, self-seeking men have constant temptations wherever they go. Wherever they go they carry their temptations with them. They manufacture temptations to themselves in every place and out of every thing. And Lot was not a high-minded man. With all his early opportunities, and with all his early promises, Lot was not, and never became, a high-minded man. We are never told all his life one large-hearted, or one noble-minded, or one single self-forgetful thing about Lot. Low-minded men see their opportunity in everything. Your stumble, your fall, your misfortune, your approaching age, your illness, your death—all is grist to the mill of the mean-minded man. And Abraham's fall in Egypt, and, especially, Abraham's fast-growing indifference to his fast-growing wealth, would be a secret delight to Lot. And then, that Abraham and Sarah with all their wealth had no son! Why, let Lot just wait on a few years and the whole of the immense family inheritance will be his. He

will be the undisputed heir of Terah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and all. Lot is the father of all of you who are waiting for dead men's shoes. You all take of Lot who marry, and build, and borrow money on the strength of this rich man's old age, and that ageing woman's childlessness. True, there was that Eliezer of Damascus, and some other men who were deep in Abraham's confidence, and much trusted by him,—but blood is thicker than water, and Lot will live in hope.

It was Lot's highest interest to behave himself well before Abraham, and to do nothing that would lead Abraham to suspect his nephew's false and sordid heart. But sordid-heartedness like Lot's will not always hide. Lot struck what might well have been a fatal blow at his own dearest hopes with his own hand. And had Abraham not been a weak, old, unworldly soul; had Abraham not borne all things, and believed all things, and hoped all things, and endured all things, Lot would soon have reaped as he had sown. But Abraham was what he was, and Lot had his profit out of that. Abraham had come up out of Egypt overwhelmed with shame and broken in his heart; and one result of all that was that he was overwhelmed with shame at his increasing prosperity also. Abraham, after Egypt, was the first father of all those who since his day have every day said, He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Every new acre of pasture land, and every new well of water for his cattle, and every new time of stocktaking, only made Abraham

confess himself more and more a stranger and a pilgrim with God on the earth. But not his nephew. Not Lot. Lot was fast becoming the father of all hard-faced, hard-hearted, close-fisted, money-loving men. And Lot's herdmen knew their master, took of him, and studied how to please him. They removed the landmarks; they drew off the water; they picked constant quarrels with Abraham's patient herdmen, till the strife between the two camps was the scandal of the whole country round. But blessed are the peacemakers. Hear, then, what the first peacemaker in the Bible said, and go and say and do likewise, 'And Abraham took Lot and said to him, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or, if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.' And then hear this, and resolve never, all your days, under any offer, or opportunity, or temptation of any kind to do what miserable, mean-spirited Lot did. Just hear what he did. You would not believe it. 'And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as thou comest into Zoar. And Lot chose all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tents toward Sodom.' O my friends,

labour to have a heart created within you that will make it simply impossible for you ever to do to anybody what Lot did that day to Abraham. What a man chooses, and how a man chooses, when opportunities and alternatives and choices are put before him—nothing more surely discovers a man than that. Abraham chose household peace; while Lot chose good pasture ground at the cost of disgrace, and shamelessness, and all unhandsomeness and ingratitude, and got Sodom to the boot of the bargain. Abraham, though the older man, and the man, moreover, with all the title-deeds to all the land of Canaan in his hands, put all that wholly aside and placed himself on an equality with his dependent nephew; placed himself under Lot, indeed, and gave him his choice. One would have thought that if anything would have melted Lot's brazen face and made him blush and become a man, it would have been the nobility, the munificence, and the fine high-mindedness of his uncle. But Lot's heart was turned to stone. Till with his hard eyes Lot stood up and looked out the best land and the best water in all the country round, and drove his flocks down into it without a moment's hesitation, or a touch of remorse, or so much as a Thank you. Lot knew quite well both the name and the character of that city lying in the rain and sunshine below. He had often heard his uncle praying and plotting with God with all his might for Sodom. But Lot had no fear. Lot did not care. His cattle were already up to their bellies in the grass around Sodom, and that was heaven upon earth to Lot.

It is a time of most tremendous import when a young man is still choosing toward what city he is to pitch his tent for life. And how often our young men make their choice as if the history of Lot had never been written. Think, fathers; oh, think, mothers; think, young men, also, with so much at stake—think what the temptations and the dangers and the almost sure issues of this and that choice in life must be. All our trades, professions, occupations in life have, each one, its own perils and temptations and snares to the soul; as well as its own opportunities of gain, and honour, and praise, and service. The ministry, teaching, law, medicine, the army, political life, newspaper life, trade of all kinds, the money-market of all kinds, and so on. Open your eyes. Count the cost. Are you able? Will you venture? Take that line of life which you are just about to choose. Take time over it. Look all round it. Imagine yourself done with it. Look at this man and that man who are done with it. Would you like to be like them? Study well the successes and the failures in that line of life. Read the thirteenth and the nineteenth chapters of Genesis, and then take those two chapters with you to your knees, and so make your choice. Look at your motives in making your choice. Look at its dangers, its temptations, and especially at its companionships. Look at the people you will have to part company with, and at the people among whom you will henceforth dwell, and then let the die be cast. Lot chose all the plain of Jordan, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Just when Lot is beginning to make the acquaintance of the men of Sodom, and is finding them, as he was sure he would find them, not so bad as they were reported; just as he was opening accounts for his tent and his camp with the merchants of Sodom, the Lord is hastening down to redress the wrong and to recognise and recompense Abraham. You put God in your debt as often as you do any handsome and unselfish thing; and, especially, anything in the pure interests of righteousness and peace. And it is wise and politic to put God in your debt now and then. For He always pays His debts sooner or later. And He always pays you with His gold for your paper, and with His usury to your uttermost farthing. And thus it is that we go on to read that the Lord said to Abraham, after that Lot was departed from him, 'Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for to thee will I give it. Then Abraham removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the land of Mamre, and built there an altar to the Lord.' With all that, then, which is it to be with you? The plain of Jordan with Lot, or the plain of Mamre with Abraham? A family altar with the father of the faithful, or a seat at sunset in the gate of Sodom with Lot?

Lot was not long in getting a lesson that would have brought a less besotted sinner to his senses.

The first war in the Bible broke out in the valley of the Jordan not very long after Lot had settled in Sodom. The war is known in ancient history as that of the four kings against five. Moses would have had no interest in that dim old dispute but for Lot. Lot, with all his great faults, nay, rather, because of his great faults, gets chapter after chapter of Moses' precious space. Well, the upshot of that war was that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated and fled, and Lot was taken prisoner with all his possessions, and was marched off in great haste up the Jordan and away to the mountains. But as Lot's guardian angel would have it, one of Lot's herdmen escaped; and how his heart would sink as he came near Abraham's encampment at Hebron! But to whom else could he go? His own conscience of the past bitterly upbraided him as he told Abraham the disaster; but Abraham had something else to do than to trample on a fallen man. In three crowded verses Moses tells his readers the result. Abraham fell upon the sleeping camp, and Lot was a free man next morning with all his goods. Now, you know yourselves how you return back again to your former life as soon as the strain of the tribulation is over. As the cruel kings hurried Lot up the Jordan with a rope round his neck, how that chastised saint vomited up Sodom and all her works, and how he cursed himself as the greatest fool in all the land of Canaan. You can all cast your stones of anger and scorn and astonishment at Lot; I cannot. Till you try to break loose from an old evil way, you

will never believe me how impossible it is for you to do it.

All this time there must have been something far better in Lot than anything that Moses lets us see. To read Second Peter on Lot is far more comforting than to read Moses. For Peter tells us in his Second Epistle that, when God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, He delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. But, then, to read that only makes us stop and say and ask, Why did a man with a beginning like Lot, and with past experiences like Lot, why did he not rise up and leave a life, and a neighbourhood, and an occupation, and a companionship out of all which so much danger and so much vexation of soul continually sprang? The reason was that he had invested in Sodom, as our merchants would say. He had invested money, and he had embarked himself and his household in the land round Sodom, in the produce of Sodom, and in her splendid profits. And with all the vexations that wrung his heart Lot could never make up his mind to be done with Sodom and Gomorrah for ever. I suppose there must be just men among ourselves who have chosen early in life, or who have inherited, or who have themselves built up a business, the partners in which, the questionable righteousness of which, nay, the not questionable unrighteousness of which, often vexes their hearts far more than we know or would believe. But to come out of that manufacture, that import, that export; to refund with usury those moneys; to rise up at the loss

of thousands and thousands, nay, possibly at the loss of every penny a man possesses; to leave a splendidly paying business merely at the twinge of a secretly tortured conscience,—no man ever does it. Lot therefore is the father of all those men whose righteous souls are vexed with the life they are leading, but who keep on enduring the vexation. And Peter's New Testament point is this—that righteous men will go on enduring vexation like that of Lot till the Lord Himself rises up and comes down to deliver them. Lot's deliverance came through a catastrophe the sound of which and the smoke of which blows like opening hell into our eyes to this day. Just what God will have to do to deliver your soul and mine from the things that so endanger our souls and so vex them His time will tell. Only, this we may rely upon, that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of their temptations, and He will do it too, if He has to burn up all we possess with fire and brimstone from heaven. In that terrible day may His angels be near to lay hold of us!

XIII

SARAH

BUT SARAH WAS BARREN,
SHE HAD NO CHILD

WHICH things are an allegory,' says the Apostle when he brings in Sarah and Hagar her handmaid into the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians. And no doubt, his first readers must have understood the Apostle's mystical argument and must have got the good they needed in their day out of his spiritual exposition. But if Paul had only been led to take up our text of to-night, and to treat Sarah and her childlessness as an allegory, what an evangelical argument, and what a fruitful and far-reaching application both the Galatian Church and all the churches ever after would have got! For, out of this little, parenthetical, hidden-away verse the whole of the succeeding eleven epoch-making chapters of Genesis immediately spring. Chaldea, and Canaan, and Egypt; Hagar and Ishmael; the promise of Isaac, and then the birth, the circumcision, the sacrifice, and the deliverance of Isaac; all the trials and all the triumphs of his father's

and his mother's faith; all their falls; all their victories; all God's promises, and all His wonderful and adorable providences in their so exercised lives; all their attainments in truth and in obedience; and then, to crown all, the complete fulfilment of God's so long delayed promise—all that, and much more that has not been told—it all arose out of this, that Sarah had no child. 'It is an allegory,' says Bengel, 'when anything is said and another thing more excellent is signified.' And I cannot get it out of my heart that my text to-night, biographical reality, real historicity, and all, is somehow an allegory also. It will persist in my heart that Abraham is my faith in God's promise to me of the fruit of the Spirit in me; while childless Sarah, Abraham's married wife, is my still unfruitful heart. For I have some faith, but I have no love. I have not enough faith to make my love fruitful. My heart is as much without a spiritual seed as was Sarah's silent tent. I laugh at the idea, like Sarah behind her tent door. I say to myself, half in faith, half in fear, half in mockery at myself, Shall I ever have pleasure? Shall Christ ever be formed in me? Till I am sometimes, like poor Sarah in her sterile tent, driven desperate. Driven desperate, and reckless, and wild. Like Sarah, I fall into sore temptations between the Divine promise on the one hand, and my own evil heart on the other hand. Like her, also, I am driven to dangerous, and, sometimes, I fear, to positively sinful expedients, in my desolation and desperation. And, like Sarah, I involve and fatally

injure other people also in my desperation. But still the great promise holds on its course, and is repeated, and enlarged, and enriched, and sealed; and still it is with me as it has been from the beginning. Till, as I believe, and am determined to go on believing—God help my unbelief!—God's promise to me also shall, in God's way and at God's time, be all fulfilled. And my heart also, like Abraham and Sarah, shall see of her travail and shall be satisfied. Yes. Had Paul, or even Philo; had Behmen, or Bunyan but taken up this text, and said, 'Which things are an allegory,' we would have had doctrine, and depth, and beauty, and assurance, and comfort to our heart's content.

But to come back to solid ground, and to speak no more about parables. As time went on, and as the hope of any possibility of her ever becoming a mother died out of Sarah's heart, she became absolutely desperate. Had meekness, and humility, and resignation, and the blotting-out of herself, but grown apace with her disappointment, that would have hid Sarah from all her temptations, and it would at the same time have hastened the lifting off of her cross. But her terrible cross had but inflamed and intensified her pride; it had but determined her to find some wild and wilful way for herself out of God's way and God's will. It was intolerable to Sarah to live on any longer such an embarrassment to her husband, such an evident obstacle to the prosperity of his house, and such an eye-sore and jest to all the camp and to all the country around. And in the wildness of her

pride Sarah determined to as good as slay herself, and to make it impossible for Abraham in his heart of hearts any longer to despise her. And thus it was that what looked like a perfect miracle of humility in Sarah, was really an act of exasperated pride. Sarah sacrificed herself on the cruellest altar on which any woman ever laid herself down; but the cords of the sacrifice were all the time the cords of a suicidal pride; till the sacrifice was both a great sin in the sight of God, a fatal injury to herself, to her husband, and to innocent generations yet unborn. What looks to all men's eyes like a martyr's devotion may all the time be but impatience, and petulance, and pride, and revenge. The outward act may sound heroic, while all the time cowardice and selfishness and exasperated pride may be at the bottom of it. To sacrifice yourself, therefore, is not enough. Your mind, your motive, your spirit, and your temper in making the sacrifice, that is everything. Sarah sacrificed herself to the last drop of a woman's blood; but all the time her heart was as high as heaven and as hot as hell both against God and against her husband also. 'Behold, now, the Lord hath restrained me; but there is my maid!'

You are a truly humble man when you are truly despised in your own eyes. But your humility has not stood its very last test till you are despised in our eyes also every day. The truest humility is attained; the truest humility is ascertained, and certified, and sealed only by humiliations being heaped upon it from without; from above, from

beneath, and from all around. And, had Sarah's humility been a true and a genuine humility; had her ostentatious sacrifice of herself not had its secret roots in a deep and a cruel pride; she would have opened her heart to all Hagar's contempt. Hagar's scorn would have been an excellent oil to Sarah's head, and she would thus have secured and hastened her own fruitfulness and motherhood. But Sarah of herself had run herself into a temptation too terrible for her to bear. Her humiliating childlessness was honour, and rest, and peace, and love compared with her uttermost and incessant misery now. 'My wrong be upon thee,' she assailed her husband, 'for I am despised in the eyes of my own maid!' My brethren, you must make up your mind to bear with what has sprung upon you out of your own past misdeeds. It is the least you can do to hold your peace, and to bear with meekness the hand of God. Your life all your days may henceforth be made bitter to you because of your past. But what would you have? Would you have a peaceful, a free, an untrammelled, and a happy after-life out of a past life like yours? You cannot have it. Life is not built on that plan. God does not live in heaven and rule on earth on that principle. Or, if He does, the worse it will be for you in the long-run. Put it in words and look at it. Would you run yourself and other people into sin and guilt as suits you, and then would you wipe your mouth and walk off as a guileless and an innocent man? You cannot do

it. And you need not try. Kiss the rod rather. Kiss the rod, and the hand that holds it. Say, It is the Lord. Say that though He should slay you, yet you will not complain. Say this; say it with Micah when he was in some such distress, say, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause and execute judgment for me.' Cast out the bondwoman and her son! No, Sarah, you cannot do it. You may try to do it, but the angel of the Lord will bring Hagar and Ishmael back again upon you. You surely know Hagar, Sarah! She is your own handmaiden. But for you, you must remember, Hagar would have still been a pure, modest, obedient child. And if she and her unlawful son are thorns in your eyes, they are both thorns of your own planting. You bought Hagar in Egypt. You bribed her to leave her mother's house. You engaged to be a mother to her. You took her, and made her your tool; you debauched her, and then you would cast her out. And you did, and would do all this, in spite both of God and man. And now you would like to get back to where you were before your terrible trespass. You would fain have Hagar and her fatherless boy back in Egypt, and your tent in Canaan the abode of peace and love and honour it was at the beginning. No, Sarah, mother of so much mischief, you cannot have it. It cannot be. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Hagar had not come from Ur of the Chaldees with the immigration, neither had she been bought

by Abraham in Canaan. Hagar, originally, was an Egyptian child. When Sarah was down in Egypt with her husband Abraham, young Hagar had been recommended to Sarah for a lady's maid. And Sarah had made trial of the girl in the place, and had been glad to find that she had all the talent and all the character she had been certificated to have. And though it looked a wild proposal that Hagar should leave her mother's house, and all the religion and civilisation of Egypt, to go to the savage land of the Philistines, yet, what a princess like Sarah had once set her heart upon, poor people like Hagar's parents could not oppose. Sarah was rich, and she had the imperious temper of riches. And, besides, Sarah, the sister of Abraham, was a favourite in Pharaoh's palace. Hagar's expatriation and banishment so far from home made her all the better a maid to Sarah. Hagar had no choice. She must please her mistress. She had no temptation or opportunity to do anything else. She was so far from home now that Sarah became both mistress and mother to the poor Egyptian girl. All went well, only too well, indeed, with Sarah and Hagar till Sarah's sin began to find her out. And when Sarah dealt hardly with Hagar she fled from the face of her mistress. Poor Hagar! Mother of so many miserable women in all lands and in all ages ever since. Hundreds of miles, weeks of wilderness, and of tears, and of bleeding feet, and of a bleeding heart from her mother's door. Afraid to face her mother. Terrified at the thought of her father. Spat upon and cast out of doors by

her sisters and their husbands. Shall she kill her child? Shall she kill herself? Oh, why was I born? Oh, why did I ever come to this cursed land? Why did I ever take the wages of that wicked woman? Let the night perish on which she took me and led me up into her bed! Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the gross darkness terrify it! Till she awakened and found herself with a well of water close beside her. 'Return to thy mistress. Submit thyself to thy mistress. Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward,' said the angel at the well. And as she drank of the well she said, Beer-lahai-roi. Thou God seest me! Behold, that well still springs up in the wilderness of Shur; it is to be found on the road between Kadesh and Bered.

Beer-lahai-roi. Thou God seest me! Hagar, by reason of the extremity of her sorrow; by reason of the utter desolateness and brokenness of her heart; and by reason of the sovereign grace and abounding mercy of God—Hagar, I say, stands out before us in the very foremost rank of faith, and trust, and experience, and assurance. Hagar, to me, stands out among God's very electest saints. Hagar has only one or two who can stand beside her in her discovery of God, in her nearness to God, in her face-to-face fellowship with God, in the instructiveness, in the comfort, and in the hopefulness of her so close communion with God. Not Adam before his fall; not Enoch, who so pleased God; not Abraham at his call, or after offering his son; not Jacob at Bethel, nor Israel at the Jabbok; not Moses on the

mount and in the cleft rock; not Isaiah in the temple, and not John in the spirit—not the best and the most blessed of them all was more blessed or better blessed than was Hagar the polluted outcast on her weeping way to Shur. The pure in heart shall see God. And, what impurity Hagar had contracted of Sarah and Abraham she had washed away, her head waters and her eyes a fountain of tears, all the way from Abraham's tent door to that well in the wilderness. She had washed her polluted body and her scornful and revengeful heart with her penitential tears, till, by the time she came to the well, she was counted clean enough to see God. And she saw God at that wilderness-well with a clearness, and with an assurance, and with a rapture, and with a submission, and with an immediate obedience that all combine to lift up Hagar and to set Hagar beside, and even before, both her master and her mistress in the favour and in the fellowship of God. For, from that day on the way to Shur, all the days of Hagar's pilgrimage on earth, we still see Sarah and Abraham entreating Hagar with hardness till she drinks again and again of the well of God, and again and again has Almighty God given to her and to him as the heavenly Father of her fatherless son. In Thee, O God, the fatherless have always found mercy.

Now, in God's mercy, is there any Hagar here? Is there any outcast here? Is there any soul of man or woman ready to perish here? Who can tell who is here? Where would such be found if not here? Is not this the house of God? Does this house not stand on the wayside to Shur? Has this

house not been Beer-lahai-roi to many who were in far greater straits, and under far greater guilt, than ever Hagar was? Many have said of this house, Thou God seest me! Many have come up to this house with a secret burden. Many have gone home from this house to take up their cast-off cross, and to endure to the end. Is there a motherless woman-child here? Is there a deceived, injured, cast-out sinner here? My sister, thy God is here. Thou hast been led of His angel in coming here. His well is here. He has dug that well for thee. Spring up, O well! And that is He Himself, His true and very Self, Who is now laying His hand on thy dishonoured and downcast head. That is His Holy Spirit who is now bringing these tears to thine eyes. That is His voice in thy heart, saying 'Hagar, Sarah's maid, whence comest thou, and whither wilt thou go?' Stoop down, Hagar, and drink and be refreshed and revived. Fall down and weep. Lift up thy heart and pray. Behold, Hagar, He is lifting thee up. He is washing thy feet. He is washing thy hands. He is washing with water and with blood thy heart. Think, Hagar, think. Believe, Hagar, believe. Admire, Hagar, and praise. For He is the same wonderful, wonderful, most wonderful God who met the first Hagar on her way back to her mother's disgraced and angry door. Wonderful is His name. He was in Egypt, He was in Canaan, He was in Mamre, and He appeared at Shur. He was there when thou wert born in thy mother's house in Scotland also. He swaddled thee, He girded thee, He called thee by thy name. The foolishness of thy youth was not hid from Him.

He bore with thee, and still bore with thee. And when thy lovers had hold of thy deceived heart, He pitied thee, and had thoughts of love toward thee. And when thy lovers wearied of thee, and had served themselves of thee, then His time of love began with thee. When thou didst fall His hand held thee up. When thou hadst destroyed thyself He redeemed thee. He made thy sin bitter to thee. He made thy life a wilderness around thee. He made thy heart a wilderness within thee. He made this whole world flint to thy feet, and dust to thy mouth, and a very hell to thy cast-off heart. And when He had humbled thee, and tried thee, and utterly broken and silenced thee, He came near at the well of Shur to thee, and these, to His everlasting praise, were His words to thee, 'Fear not, for thou shalt not be confounded. For thy Maker is thy husband. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in judgment against thee shalt thou condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.'

'Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer. Thy name is from everlasting.'

XIV

ISAAC

ISAAC LOVED ESAU BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON

THE patriarch Isaac presents but a pale appearance as he stands planted between two so stately and so impressive personages as his father Abraham on the one hand, and his son Jacob on the other hand. Isaac, notwithstanding our familiarity with his name, has hitherto made very little impression on our minds. Were we suddenly asked what we remember about Isaac, the chances are that we would get very little further than that memorable day when Abraham took his only son, and bound him, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And, indeed, as we follow out the sad declension of Isaac's character to the end, it is forced upon us that it would have been well for Isaac, and for all connected with Isaac, that Abraham's uplifted hand had not been arrested by the angel of the Lord. Had Isaac died on his father's altar, an immense impression for good would have been made on all who ever heard of his submission and devotion; and, besides, the

whole after-history of Israel, and of the nations around Israel, would have been far purer, far more peaceful, and every way far more happy. But all that is in the far future.

Isaac, like Noah and Lot before him, those two other shipwrecks of the best early promise, made a splendid start. In his early start in faith and in obedience, Isaac by a single bound at once outdistanced all who had gone before him. We are so taken up with Abraham's faith and surrender in the matter of Moriah, that we forget the splendid part that Isaac must have performed in that terrible trial; that magnificent triumph of faith and submission. I do not wonder that the Church of Christ has all along persisted in seeing in Isaac an outstanding type of our Lord, and in making Mount Moriah a clear forecast of Gethsemane and of Calvary. For, when it came to the last agony beside the altar on that terrible hill-top —'Not my will, but thine be done,' was wrung from Isaac's broken heart, just as long afterwards, and not far from the same spot, this same surrendering cry was wrung from the broken heart of our Lord. Josephus reports a remarkable dialogue that passed between Abraham and Isaac that day, in addition to the dialogue that Moses reports. As soon as the altar was prepared, and all things were entirely ready, Abraham said to Isaac his son: 'O my son! I poured out a vast number of prayers that I might have thee for my son. And since it was God's will that I should become thy father, it is now His will that I shall relinquish

thee. Let us bear this consecration to God with a ready mind. Accordingly, thou, my son, wilt now die, not in any common way of going out of the world, but sent to God, the Father of all men, beforehand, in the nature of a sacrifice. I suppose He thinks thee worthy to get clear of this world neither by disease, neither by war, nor by any other severe way, but so that He will receive thy soul with prayers and holy offices of religion, and will place thee near to Himself, and thou wilt there be to me a succourer and supporter in my old age; and thou wilt there procure me God for my Comforter instead of thyself.' Now, Isaac was of such a generous disposition that he at once answered that he was not worthy to be born at first, if he should now reject the determination of God and his father, and should not resign himself up readily to both their pleasures. So he went up immediately to the altar to be sacrificed. The rest we know from Moses. To which Josephus only adds that Abraham and Isaac, having sacrificed the ram, embraced one another and returned home to Sarah, and lived happily together, God affording them His assistance in everything.

'And Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi.' That arrests us. That must have been intended to arrest us. And to make sure that it shall arrest us and shall not escape us, the sacred writer is not content with having told us that once; he tells us that again, and still more emphatically the second time. At the same time, having with such repeated point told us that, Moses leaves it to his readers to make

of it what they are able to make, and what they like to make. Make anything of it, or not, there stands the fact—that, in broad Canaan, as soon as Isaac had a tent of his own to pitch, he pitched his tent toward Hagar's well. Hagar, you must remember, had been Isaac's mother's maid. Not only that, but Hagar had been Isaac's own first nurse. Isaac and Ishmael, the two innocent half-brothers, had learned their lessons together, and had played together, till the two mothers fell out, and till Hagar and her unlawful son had to flee to the wilderness. But, little children never forget their first nurse, especially when she has such stories to tell as Hagar had to tell little Isaac about the palaces, and the pyramids, and the temples, and the Nile, and the crocodiles of Egypt. And then, as her charge grew up, in seasons of trouble and sorrow and mutual confidence, Hagar would be led into telling the devout little lad her wonderful story of Beer-lahai-roi. And that heavenly story took such a hold of young Isaac that to the end of his life he never found himself within a day's journey of Hagar's well without turning aside to drink of its waters and to meditate and to pray and to praise beside its streams. Where, then, when he was choosing a site for his future tent, where should he choose that site after Moriah, but on a spot scarcely less solemn to Hagar's pious little nursling than Jehovah-jireh itself. Lahai-roi was one of the two most sacred spots on earth to Hagar's two boys; and, as sometimes happens, the boy of the two who was not her own, best remembered all

she had told him, and shaped his course accordingly. It is no superstition to seek out the spots where God has come down to visit His people. It is not that God is any more there, or is any more likely to return there; but we are better prepared to meet with Him there. And God comes to those who are ready to meet with Him wherever they are. There is no respect of places with God. And nothing draws God down to any place like a heart like His own. As often, therefore, as He saw Isaac's tears dropping into the water he was drinking, God again visited Isaac also. And Isaac could never walk round that well, or sit down beside it, or drink out of it, but his tears would come fast for poor ill-used Hagar, and for poor outcast Ishmael, till he wished again that he had never been born rather than that they should both be outcast from their proper home on his account. I, for one, thank Moses warmly for writing it, and then for underscoring it, that, as soon as Isaac had a tent of his own to pitch, he pitched that tent toward Hagar's holy well.

It is now the late afternoon before the day of Isaac's marriage. Abraham's servant has performed his errand to perfection, and he is now nearing his young master's tent with Isaac's bride under his charge. 'And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the even-tide; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were drawing near.' All that day Isaac had spent in prayer and in meditation. Isaac was greatly given to solitude and to solitary thoughts, and he had much that day to think upon. The day it was made him

think. He thought of his father Abraham and his mother Sarah; and then he thought of his own wonderful birth as of one born out of due time. From that, he went on to think of Hagar his Egyptian nurse, and of Ishmael his half-brother, and of all the evil fate that had befallen both Hagar and Ishmael because of him. And then this well, whose sacred waters were now shining in the setting sun. And all that took place at this well; and that which Hagar exclaimed over this well, and which was never a day, scarcely ever an hour, out of Isaac's thoughts. And then Moriah, Mount Moriah, the mount of the Lord, had been so burned into Isaac's heart, that, for years and years, he felt its cords knotted round his arms, and saw its knife gleaming over his head. Till his heart gave a great bound as he suddenly looked up and saw the distant thread of Chaldean camels drawing slowly near with their precious burdens. And till they came near, and till Isaac met the rich procession, Isaac still prayed, and praised, and vowed to God, the God of Abraham, his godly father. It is a beautiful scene in the setting sun. 'And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she lighted off her camel. For she had said to the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master. Therefore she took a veil and covered herself. And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and

she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.'

The prophetic travail of Rebekah in giving birth to the twin-brothers Esau and Jacob, and then Esau's sale of his birthright, fill one graphic chapter, and then after another chapter we are all at once introduced to Isaac's deathbed. And then, the space given to the deathbed scenes; the dramatic situations; the eloquence and the pathos; and at the same time the suppression and the severity of the composition,—all that of itself would kindle an intense interest in the story of Isaac's last hours. And then both the writer's pains, and the reader's strained interest and attention, are all amply rewarded as we stand by and look on, and lay to heart all that goes on around that distressing deathbed. 'And it came to pass that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son; and he said to him, Behold, here I am. And he said, Behold, now, I am old. I know not the day of my death. Now, therefore, I pray thee, take thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison. And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.' The inspired writer had already been compelled to set it down, on the sad occasion of the barter of Esau's birthright, that Isaac loved Esau and despised Jacob, because he did eat of Esau's venison. And, altogether, the place that 'venison' holds on this page of the patriarchal

history, and the part it plays in the tragedy now on the stage, compel us to consider and to think what it all means to us, and what it all warns us of.

When I read Isaac's whole history over again, with my eye upon the object, it becomes as clear as a sunbeam to me that what envy was to Cain, and what wine was to Noah, and what lewdness was to Ham, and what wealth was to Lot, and what pride and impatience were to Sarah—all that, venison and savoury meat were to Isaac. I cannot get past it. I have tried hard to get past it. Out of respect for the aged patriarch, and out of gratitude for the mount of the Lord and Hagar's well, I have tried to get past it; but I cannot. 'Take me some venison. Make me savoury meat such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Esau went out to hunt for venison. And Rebekah said to Jacob, I will make savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth. And she made savoury meat such as Isaac loved. And Jacob said, Sit up, and eat of my venison. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison. And he brought it near to him and he did eat; and he brought him wine and he drank. And Esau he also made savoury meat, and said, Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison,' and so on till Isaac's deathbed reeks with venison. The steam of the savoury meat with which his two sons bid for his blessing chokes us till we cannot breathe beside Isaac's deathbed. But Isaac's ruling passion is still strong in death, so strong, that the very smell of

Esau's venison-stained coat is sweet to the old patriarch's nostrils. My brethren, there is no respect of persons in the Bible. The Bible puts the simple, naked truth before everything else. Before the consistency, before the honour, and before the good name of the saints. Before propriety, before partiality, before what is seemly to be told, before what is consoling, before what is edifying even.

The inordinate and unseemly love of good eating has an undue hold of many otherwise blameless men, of many able men also, and even of many old men. Neither the grace of God, nor some true love of the things of the mind, nor the decays of nature, would seem to be able to root out or at all to weaken this degrading vice; so deeply is it seated in some men's habits of life and character. It would not be so much to be wondered at that out-of-door men like Esau should eat and drink with a passionate delight; but that a quiet, home-keeping, devout old saint like Isaac should let his table become such a snare to his soul,—that does startle and alarm us. And we see the same thing still. Sedentary men, bookish men, and men who are never out of their study, are sometimes as fond of savoury soup and venison as ever Isaac or Esau was. That they take too little exercise seems sometimes to make them seek their relaxation and refreshment in their table even more than other men. The greatest glutton I ever knew never crossed his doorstep. His only walk all the day was from his desk to his dinner-table, and then from his dinner-table back to his desk. Now, Isaac in his old age was the father of all such men.

Isaac's very love for his sons depended on their skill and success in hunting. If a son of his could not hunt, could not run down and entrap venison, he might be a saint, but old Isaac had no blessing for him. Isaac was only happy, and full of good-humour and benediction, when he had just had another full meal. But he was sulky and peevish and fretful if his soup was short or out of season. If you would enjoy Isaac's benediction, you must get him after his dinner, and it must be of the best, and at the moment. Old Isaac, with his eyes so dim that he could not see, is the father of all those men who make their god their belly, who think too much and too often of what they shall eat and what they shall drink, who value their friends by the table they keep, and who are never so happy as when they are sitting over their venison and their wine. Isaac was the father of Ciacco in the *Inferno* and of Succus in the *Serious Call*. Of him also 'who makes every day a day of full and cheerful meals, and who by degrees comes to make the happiness of every day to depend upon that, and to consider everything with regard to that. He will go to church, or stay at home, as it suits with his dinner, and he will not scruple to tell you that he generally eats too heartily to go to the afternoon service.' And, lastly, Isaac in his infirm years, and in his increasing appetite, is the father of 'all those people, with whom the world abounds, who are weakly and tender merely by their indulgences. They have bad nerves, low spirits, and frequent indispositions, through irregularity, idleness, and

indulgence.' Such to this day are some of Isaac's sons and daughters. Four rules for such.

1. Never accept a second helping at table.

2. Never rise from table without an appetite, and you will never sit down without one.

3. Never sit down at table till you have said this for a grace—What! Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I, then, take the members of Christ and make them the members of a glutton? God forbid!

4. Only love God enough, and then eat anything you like, and eat as much as you like, said St. John of the Cross to his over-ascetical disciples.

XV

ESAU

OR PROFANE PERSON

SAU lost his birthright with all its blessings largely through his lack of imagination. The things that are unseen and eternal had neither substance nor evidence to Esau compared with the things that are seen and temporal. Jacob, his brother, had many faults, but Jacob inherited the blessing because after all is said he had eyes and a heart for the unseen and the spiritual. But Esau had no such speculation in his eyes. The covenant promises made to his fathers had no interest, they had no existence even, to Esau. They can take the promises who care for them; as for Esau, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. At the same time, Esau had many not wholly ignoble things about him. Esau was full of the manliest interests and occupations and pursuits. He was a very proverb of courage and endurance and success in the chase. He was the ruggedest, the brawniest, and the shaggiest of all the rugged, brawny, and shaggy creatures of the field and of the forest, among whom he lived and died. Esau had an eye

like an eagle. His ear never slept. His foot took the firmest hold of the ground. And his hand was always full both of skill, and strength, and success. Esau's arrow never missed its mark. He was the pride of all the encampment as he came home at night with his traps, and his snares, and his bows, and his arrows, and laden to the earth with venison for his father's supper. Burned black with the sun; beaten hard and dry with the wind; a prince of men; a prime favourite both with men, and women, and children, and with a good word and a good gift from the field for them all. But, all the time, a heathen. All the time, an animal more than a man. All the time, all body and no soul. All the time a profane person, who failed of the grace of God.

In that extraordinary solidity of style, in which Moses sometimes surpasses Dante himself, we have Isaac and Esau and Jacob set before us to the life in six or seven verses. 'And Jacob sod pottage; and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.' This was not the first time that Esau and Jacob had

exchanged words about that birthright. No man sells his birthright on the spot. He who sells his birthright, sells it many times in his heart before he takes it so openly as that to the market. He belittles it, and despises it, and cheapens it, at any rate to himself, long before he sells it so cheaply to another. No man, and no woman, falls in that fatal way without having prepared their fall for themselves in their hearts. Esau had showed his contempt for his birthright a thousand times, and in a thousand ways, before now. Everybody knew that Esau's birthright was for sale, if anybody cared to bid for it. Isaac knew, Rebekah knew, and Jacob knew; and Jacob had for long been eyeing his brother for a fit opportunity. It had for a long time back been marrow to Jacob's bones to hear Esau jesting so openly about his birthright over his venison and his wine; jesting and being jested about the covenant blessing. 'As much as you are able to eat, Esau! and anything else you like to name, to boot; only, say that you toss me to-day your worthless birthright,' said Jacob. 'Take it, and welcome!' said Esau. 'And much good may it do you! It has never been worth a haunch of good venison to me. You may have it, and my oath on it on the spot, for a good dish at once, and be quick, of your smoking pottage. Take it, and let me be done with it. Take it, and let me hear no more about it.' And Esau did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way.

Esau's roving habits of life; his increasing distaste for the life and the religion of his father's

house; and, now that he had cut himself so completely adrift by openly selling his birthright, with all its privileges, and obligations, and responsibilities—all that combined to throw Esau more and more into the company of the old Canaanite communities that lay all around the patriarchal settlements. Esau, alas! was all the time himself a true Canaanite at heart. Son of Isaac and Rebekah, and grandson of Abraham and Sarah, as he was, Esau had nothing of his forefathers or his foremothers in him, unless it was some of the dregs of their remaining vices; and, as the apostle has it, some of their springing up roots of bitterness. All that Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, had passed through; all their trials, and all their triumphs, and all their attainments of faith and of obedience, had left no mark at all on Esau, their so profane descendant. And everything that Esau did, every step that he took in life, every choice that he made in life, and every bargain that he struck, only made that more and more manifest. A man's choice in his marriage, more than anything else in this life, makes it manifest what that man is, and where his heart is. Now, Esau's marriage, fatal step as it also was, was not the passionate impulse of a moment, any more than his sale of his birthright had been. Esau had hunted for years with the brothers of Judith and Bashemath. He had eaten and drunken and danced with the Hittite inhabitants of the land. He had sacrificed and sworn and vowed to their false gods of the fields, and of the streams, and of the unclean groves. Like every reprobate

from a better life, Esau had far outdone the sons of Beeri and Elon in their impieties and debaucheries. Till, at last, and in open defiance of all decency and religion, he brought home two Canaanite wives to his father's covenanted camp. 'Now, all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.' And thus it is that we see the same things in the end of the world that has come upon ourselves. A child is born and baptized in a God-fearing house; and yet, by some fatality, or what shall we call it, he grows up as much outside the best life of his father's house as Esau all his days was outside the best life of Isaac's house. He is a little heathen among his brothers and sisters and school-fellows. His birthright is the Sabbath-day, and the Lord's table, and the society of the best people in the city, and, first a youthhood, and then a manhood, of purity and piety and the service of Christ in His church. But his first act of free and independent life is to sell all that, sometimes for a better salary; sometimes for the smile and the patronage of the open enemies of his father's faith; and sometimes for a coarser mess than even that. Years pass on till Esau sets up an openly heathen household in defiance of father and mother and all, which is ever after a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. The tragedy is not so patent to us because we do not have Moses to write out our household histories, and Paul to comment on the writing, as in Esau's case; but to those who train themselves and accustom themselves to look

on the world around them in this one single view as God's world, there is plenty of such profanity and self-reprobation going on among us every day.

What with the purpose of God according to election, and that purpose communicated to Rebekah when she went to inquire of the Lord; what with Isaac's love for Esau because he did eat of his venison; what with Rebekah's retaliatory love for Jacob; what with Esau's increasing levity and profanity, and Jacob's increasing subtlety; what with Esau's defiant Canaanite marriage; and now, to crown all, Isaac's old age, blindness, and fast-approaching end—what with all that, that was as unhappy a house as was at that moment on the face of this unhappy earth. So full is that house, covenant promises and all, of guilty secrets, guilty memories, guilty wrongs, guilty remorses, guilty intentions, and guilty hopes and fears. It has often been pointed out what a mercy it is that God keeps our own future, and the future of our families, to Himself; and does not burden, and entangle, and tempt us with a knowledge that we are not able to bear. Rebekah would have children; and then she would know the secret things that belonged to Him who was forming her children in her womb; and, then, not able to wade into, and to keep her feet in the deep places of God, she fell into a life-long snare and sea of trouble, and laboured all her days under a life-long cross. It would take a Shakespeare, as deep in grace as in nature, to put upon the stage that hell upon earth that opened its mouth day and

night in Isaac's covenant tent. A more powerful and a more fruitful chapter for the sacred ends of tragedy was never written than the tragical chapter of Isaac's deathbed. The decayed life, and the still more decayed faith, of Abraham's only son Isaac; the cunning and treachery of Rebekah, the bride he had brought into his mother Sarah's tent in love; Jacob, the too willing tool of his cunning mother's chicanery and lies; the pitiful imposition perpetrated upon the blind old epicure; and, then, reprobate Esau's unavailing cry of remorse and revenge. Yes, verily. The ways of transgressors are hard! The wages of sin is death!

On the principle, then, that all these things about Esau are written for our admonition, how shall we be best admonished against Esau's profane and disastrous mind? To know the truth about him, and about ourselves, is the first thing for us all to set about to-night. Well, to begin with, we are all more or less like Esau in our birth, and in our birthright, and in our profane and brutish mind about our birthright. Like Esau, we have all been born inside the covenant. We have all been sealed with the seal of the covenant. We have all been baptized for a future far greater, and far more full of blessing, than that future which fell either to Esau or to Jacob. But we have all Esau's profane mind and hard heart in us also. And, if any one would but teach us; if any great writer or great preacher, if any wise father or loving mother could and would but take us early in hand, and tell us, and let us see, that all this life is not to make what

is called money, or to attain what is called success, or to fill our belly with what is called pleasure, but that God Himself has set us here so to live, and so to choose, and so to act as to put off every day this profane mind, and to put on a sacred, a spiritual, a divine, a heavenly mind—if any one with authority and with influence would but tell and teach us that! For, like Esau, to begin with, we have no imagination. We have no eyes, neither of body nor of mind, for God, or for Jesus Christ, or for heaven, or for hell, or for holiness, or for eternal life. Before we are out of our boyhood we are become vain in our imaginations, and our foolish hearts are darkened, and we worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. And for this cause God gives us over to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind. That was Esau's early history; and that is the early and life-long history of multitudes among ourselves. There is an intellectual, and with it a spiritual stupidity—there is no other name for it—that has already taken possession of one out of every two children that are born in our most covenanted households. They soon declare and show themselves to be utterly insensible to everything intellectual, spiritual, moral, noble, and above the world that knows not God. If they are rich and idle, they spend their days, like Esau, hunting down creatures of God that have more of God's image in them than their hunters have. They eat, and drink, and dress, and dance like Esau, with any Canaanite household which has sons and daughters like themselves. But they never read a good book. They never attend a

good teacher. They have neither time nor taste for anything that pertains to the mind or the heart. Philo calls Esau a 'wooden' man; and the number of wooden men and women who sit at our dinner tables eating venison and drinking wine, and who are then driven all the noisy night after to our city assemblies, far outnumber those people who are made of any finer or more spiritual material. Put off the wood and the earth, put off the insensibility and the profanity that are still in you all, my brethren. And put on mind, and heart, and understanding, and consideration, and imagination. Choose your reading. Choose your company. Choose your husband and your wife. Choose your birthright. Choose life, and not death; blessing, and not cursing; heaven, and not hell. You can, if you choose. You can, if you like. Only, lay this to heart with all holy fear, that there is insensibility, and stupidity, and profanity enough in you by nature, and up to this day, to make you, amid all your covenant surroundings, a reprobate of a far worse kind than ever Esau was, unless, with tears, you seek a place of repentance. And it will take all your tears, and all your time, and all the repentance, and all the remission of sins, that Christ can give you out of His place of exaltation, to enable you to escape his end at last who ate and drank, and despised his birthright.

Young men! come, come, and I will tell you! All of you who have not up to this night quite sold the whole of your birthright. Oh! never, never do it. Die, and we shall bury you with

honour, and with assurance; but, oh! my son, my brother, never, never, till the day of your death, sell to man or woman or devil your divine birthright. Your birthright of truth, and honesty, and honour, and, especially, of chastity. Sell everything but that! There must be some men here to-night just at the crisis, and just in the temper, in which Esau came home so hungry from the hunt. There are men in this house who are saying this to themselves: 'I am alone. I have nobody to care for me. If I had, it would be different, and I would be a better man. But in all this big city, in all broad Scotland, there is no one for whose sake I need keep my head above water. Though I go out of this house, and sell myself to hell to-night, no one will lament me. What profit shall it do to me to make any more stand against the gambling-table, or the dram-shop, or anything else!' My own son! ring my bell to-night, and I will talk with you and will tell you the rest. I have not lived to grey hairs in a city, and been a minister of city families, and city young men, without learning things about birthrights and their sale and their redemption too—things that cannot be told on the housetop. No minister in Edinburgh knows more or can speak better about these things than I can do. If you have no minister who can and will tell you about Esau, and about himself, and about yourself, and about Jesus Christ, ring my bell! It will be late that I do not open the door! I will be busy that we do not have another hour over Esau—you and I.

But what is to be said to those who are long past all that? What is to be said to those whose birthright has been sold past all redemption long ago? To those who have sold, not their birthright only, but their very selves, soul and body, so long ago, and so often since then? All this about Esau is agony to them. They are beside themselves with remorse and with misery. They are tired to death seeking for a place of repentance. They are beginning to seek for a field of blood, and some Sabbath night, unless God himself prevent them, they will go out like Judas. But God will prevent. He will come, and He will prevent all that from this time henceforth. 'Save from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom. O Esau, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help. Ye have sold yourselves for nought, but ye shall be redeemed without money. What fruit had ye then in those things of which ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life. Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us, He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection

of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.'

XVI

REBEKAH

AND THE WIFE SEE THAT SHE REVERENCE HER HUSBAND

SWEETER chapter was never written than the twenty-fourth of Genesis, nor a sadder than the twenty-seventh, and all the bridge that spans the gulf between them is the twenty-eighth verse of the twenty-fifth chapter. The picture of aged Abraham swearing his most trusty servant about a bride for his son Isaac; that servant's journey to Padan-aram in the far east; Rebekah, first at the well, and then in her mother's house; and then her first sight of her future husband—that long chapter is a perfect gem of ancient authorship. But, the sweetness of the picture, and the perfection of the writing, only go to deepen and darken the terrible tragedy of Isaac's death-bed. That the ship was launched on such a golden morning only the more darkens the surrounding gloom when she goes to the bottom.

'And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her own mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her: Wilt thou go with

this man? And she said, I will go.' Though no one knew it, and though she did not know it herself, Rebekah's heart had been Isaac's all the time. The story of Abraham her old kinsman's call; the aged Terah's enterprise and pilgrimage; Isaac's fair and princely youth, and then his offering on the altar — all that had been a household word in Rebekah's mother's house, and all that had for long fired Rebekah's so easily fired heart. And thus it was that, every day for long, as she went out to the well for water, she had looked away west over the vast sands of Mesopotamia, and had wished to heaven that she had been born a man-child, so that she, too, might have been called of God to go out to His land of promise, and there to have her part in the founding of a family of saints, and princes, and great men of God. And, now, what has God wrought for Rebekah! Is she beside herself? Is she awake, and is this broad daylight, and not a dream? Her heart bounds up to God and blesses Him, as she goes down to the well and waters camel after camel, the camels that are Abraham's and Sarah's and Isaac's camels. And never did woman's heart so go forth of her as Rebekah's heart did when Abraham's servant put an ear-ring of gold upon her face, and bracelets of gold upon her hands. Had Rebekah had to walk barefoot over all the burning sands that separated Padan-aram from the land of promise, nothing would have kept Rebekah back from an election and a call so divine, so sweet to her heart, and so welcome as was that warm argument of the aged Eliezer of Damascus. Hearken,

O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. Or ever I was aware, says the bride in the Song, my heart had made me like the chariots of Amminadib. And Rebekah said, Yes, I will go.

The single plank that spans the terrible gulf between Isaac's marriage-bed and his death-bed is laid for us in this single sentence: 'Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob.' And, standing on that plank, he that hath ears will hear that bottomless pit of married sorrow that Isaac and Rebekah had dug and filled for themselves and for their two sons, boiling up and roaring all around him. It sickens us to stand there and to think of such life-long sorrow after such a sweet start. There are years and years and years of secret alienation, and distaste, and dislike in that little verse. There are heart-burnings and heart-breaks; hidden hatreds and open quarrels; deceits and duplicities, and discoveries of deceits and duplicities, enough to make Isaac old and blind and dead before the time. When the two twin-brothers were brought up day after day and hour after hour in an atmosphere of favouritism, and partiality, and indulgence, and injustice, no father, no mother, can surely need to have it pointed out to them what present misery, and what future wages of such sin, is all to be seen and to be expected in that evil house. Eloquent with wickedness as the words are—Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob—yet they make little impression on us till we have read on and on

through chapter after chapter, full of the fruit of that wicked little verse. But, then, after we are glutted with the woes of that long and sorely chastised house, if we have any heart, and conscience, and imagination, we come back and stand on that reeling plank till the smoke of the torment of Isaac's and Rebekah's sin comes up like Sodom itself into our blinded eyes.

> Not in their brightness, but their earthly stains,
> Are the true seed vouchsafed to earthly eyes,
> And saints are lowered that the world may rise.

One of the very first fruits of that devil's garden that Isaac and Rebekah had sowed for themselves was the two heathen marriages that Esau went out and made and brought home, and which were such a grief to Isaac and to Rebekah. That great grief would seem to have been almost the only thing the two old people were at one about by that time. It was a bitter pill to Rebekah, those two marriages of Esau. And it was bitter only. She got no after-sweet out of it, as she might so well have got. For the old disorder and disgrace still went on; only, henceforth to be increased and aggravated by the introduction of those two new sources of disorder and disgrace, Judith and Bashemath, into that already sufficiently disordered and disgraced household. Esau is greatly blamed by some preachers for his heathen marriages; but, surely, quite unfairly. We talk to Esau about the covenant, and what not. But Esau answers us that, for his part, he saw little covenant in his father's house beyond the name.

And Esau might very well think that he could surely get a mother for his children from nearer home than Padan-aram, who would be as fair, and wise, and kind, and good to them as his covenant mother had been to him. Poor Esau could not say what Santa Teresa says about herself in her happy *Life of Herself*. 'It helped me, too,' she tells us, 'that I never saw my father and my mother respect anything but goodness.' And again: 'My mother was a woman of great goodness, and had great sense.' Poor, mishandled Esau could not say that to his children. The disrespect and utter lack of reverence that his mother showed to his father made Judith's respect and reverence to Beeri, and Bashemath's respect and reverence to Elon, an attraction and a refuge and a rest to Esau's restless heart. And I do not believe that the two Hittite women, whom Esau made his two wives, ever played him such a trick in his old age as Rebekah played his old father Isaac. My brethren, let our children not hear any less in our houses about calls, and covenants, and covenant promises, and covenant hopes; but let them see far more covenant fruit in family love, family fair-play, family reverence, and family oneness of mind.

As to Rebekah's treatment of her quiet, silent, retiring, fast-ageing husband, there is this to be said for her, that there is some reason to believe that she had not had a very good example set her in this respect in her old home. She had seen her old father Bethuel overlooked, slighted, often forgotten, and often pushed aside in his own house.

Had Bethuel's daughter been made of the finest and most womanly-hearted stuff, that humiliating sight at home would have secured to her future husband all the more reverence and honour, deference and love. That Bethuel seldom spoke at his own table would have made a daughter of the finest kind to say to herself that, if ever she had a husband,—let her tongue be cut out before her husband was ever talked down in his own house. Only, Rebekah, with all her beauty, and with all her courage, and with all her ambition to be in the covenant line, lacked the best thing in a woman, covenant line or no—womanly sensibility, tenderness, quietness, humility, and self-submission. And, though that speck on her heart was so small as to be wholly invisible as long as she was still a maid, and a bride, and a young wife, yet it was there. And by the time that Rebekah became no longer a bride or a young wife, this speck had spread till both her heart and her character had wholly lost all wholesomeness, and sweetness, and strength. 'The one thing certain about a wife is that the result is different from the expectation—that is, if there were ever any particular and defined expectations at all. Age, illness, an increasing family, no family at all, household cares, want of means, isolation, incompatible prejudices, quarrels, social difficulties, all tell on the wife more than on the husband, and make her change more rapidly into that which she was not. Be she strong or weak, she is apt to revert to her own ways, if she has them, and if she has what is called a will of her own.' And, after a rest and

some refreshment Isaac still went on: 'There will not be real union without much self-sacrifice; each chiefly bent on pleasing the other. To most men and women this is not easy; for, what with self-confidence, self-will, self-esteem, and selfishness pure and simple, they enter the marriage state with a foregone conclusion on all the points upon which difference is possible. And there are many. And they will remain stumbling-blocks and rocks of offence, unless one will give way to the other, or both are softened by higher influences.'

'And the wife see that she reverence her husband,' says Paul, with his eye on Rebekah. Yes; but what if she cannot? What if there is so little left that is to be reverenced about her husband? 'It is one of the best bonds in a wife,' says Bacon, 'if she think her husband wise.' No doubt. But what if he is not wise? What if he is a fool? What if a wife wakens up to see that she has yoked herself till death to a churl, or to a boor, or to an ignoramus, or to a coxcomb, or to a lazy, idle log, or to a shape of a man whose God is his belly, or his purse, or just his own small, miserable self? What is a woman, so ensnared, to do? Well, she will need to be both a true woman and a true saint, if she is to do right: if she is to do the best now possible in a life of such exquisite and incessant misery. But it can be done. It has been done. And it is being done all around her by thousands of her sisters in the strength of their womanhood, and by the help of God. Let her say: I would have him. I would not see what everybody else saw, and what some of

my people were so bold and so cruel as to tell me they saw. I walked into it with my eyes shut. I thought that just to be married would be heaven upon earth. I was sure he would improve. I said that if ever woman helped a man to improve I would be that woman. And he said with such warmth that I was that woman to him, and that there was not another woman like me in the whole earth. I made this bitter bed with my own hands; and no one shall ever know, and last of all my poor husband, what a bitter bed it is to his weak and evil wife! That is the true line to take when a woman is told to reverence a husband for whom no one else has any reverence or affection. Let her determine to be a New Testament wife to him. Let her believe that Jesus Christ said, and still says, Take up thy cross daily! And let her rise up to believe and to see this, that a salvation for her immortal soul of a far deeper, a far more inward, a far more perfect, and a far more everlasting kind, lies for her in her unhappy marriage, than if she had been the proudest and most puffed-up wife in the city. These are they which came out of great tribulation, it is said in heaven over multitudes of such wives. Let her say to herself, then, every day, that this is her great tribulation. Let her put her finger on it and say, This is that through which I must go up, if I am to go up at all. And, at the worst, he is my husband. And if he is not all I would fain believe him to be, yet let me go on trying to believe it. And, perhaps, that will help him. I have not helped him as I promised and

intended to do. I have dwelt on my own disappointment and shipwreck, and not enough on his. There are two sides to our married life. There is my husband's side as well as mine; and there is his mother's side as well as my mother's. Perhaps it will help him to overcome if I behave as if he had overcome. Perhaps, if I act as if I were happy, it may help to make him happy. Let me behave myself as if he were wise, and true, and noble, and every way good, and it will greatly help to make him all that. Is there not a Scripture somewhere which says that husbands are sometimes to be won by the conversation of their wives? And, that a wife's best ornament is a meek and quiet spirit? Let me be such a wife as I have never yet been. She who so bends her back to the burden will soon find that the load is not so heavy as she thought it was. What a pity it was that Rebekah did not go to Hagar's well for water every morning, and there talk to herself in that way till she went home to reverence and to love Isaac her husband, saying all the way, Thou God seest me! What a pity it was that Rebekah did not do that!

XVII

JACOB

BE SURE YOUR SIN
WILL FIND YOU OUT

THERE was no Old Testament saint of them all who, first and last, saw more of the favour and forgiveness of God than Jacob. And yet, with all that, the great sins of Jacob's youth and the great sinfulness of Jacob's heart both found him out every day he lived down to the day of his death. Of Jacob, and of Rebekah his mother, it may truly be said, Thou, O Lord, wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance on their inventions. It is part of Moses' subtlety, as Philo calls it, to tell us how much more Rebekah loved Jacob than she loved Esau, whom Isaac loved; and then, to go on to give us two examples, and two examples only, of that love. The first example of Rebekah's motherly love is seen when she dresses up Jacob in Esau's clothes, and drills him into the very tones of Esau's voice, as also into all Esau's hearty huntsman's ways in the house, till she has rehearsed her favourite son Jacob into a finished and perfect supplanter. And then, her second love is seen in the terror and in the haste with which she ships off

Jacob to Haran lest Esau in his revenge should send one of his shafts through the supplanter's heart. All that stands in Moses, and much more like that, both in and after Moses; and yet here are we, down in the days of the New Testament, still dressing up our daughters, and emigrating our sons, as if we had been the first fathers and mothers in all the world to whom God had said, I will give thee thy wages.

Esau had been all up and down the whole country round about a hundred times. That bold and cunning hunter would be days and weeks away from home when the season came round for the venison to be on the hills. But Jacob had never been out of sight of his mother's tent-pole till now. The fugitive spent his first night in a herdman's hut, and his second night in the hut of a friendly native of the land; but after that all his nights were spent in the open air. And the first of Jacob's open-air nights is a night to be remembered, as we say. Poor Jacob! This is the beginning of the visitation of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. A Syrian ready to perish, were it not that man's extremity is God's opportunity. And were it not that Jacob, and all his true seed, are known to themselves and to us by the hundred and sixteenth psalm: 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. I was brought low, and He helped me.' And he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to

sleep. And he dreamed. God spake in divers manners in those early days. Jacob dreamed that night because Rebekah had neither a Bible nor a *Pilgrim's Progress*, nor a hymn-book, to put into his scrip beside his bread and his dates and his oil. No; nor, worst of all, a good example. Still, she may forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, yet will God not forget him. And thus it was that Jacob dreamed as he did dream his first night away from home. How dreadful is this place! Jacob had been taught to feel and to say how dreadful was that place where his father's altar was built; and those places where God had come down to talk with Adam, and Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and Hagar. But Jacob had no idea that God was at Luz, or would ever come down to talk with him there. And, then, more than that, there was this. God's presence, God's holiness, but above all God's great grace, will always make the place dreadful to a great sinner. Dreadful, with a solemnising, awful, overwhelming dread that there is no other word for. How dreadful did all Jacob's life of sin look at Luz! He had had his own thoughts about himself, and about his mother, and about his father, and about his brother all these last three days across the wilderness. But it was not till that morning at Luz that Jacob learned to say: Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned! How dreadful did his past life look now, as it lay naked and open under that gate of heaven and that shining ladder! The lasting lesson of that best of all mornings to Jacob

is memorably preserved to us and to our children in our Second Paraphrase; and as often as we sing or say to God that noble piece we still reap into our own hearts the first sheaf out of the rich harvest of Jacob's life. We always read that chapter and sing that paraphrase on the Sabbath night before we emigrate another of the sons of Jacob; but, alas! too late; for by that time our family worship, like Isaac's that night, is but locking the stable door after the steed is stolen.

What a down-come it was from the covenant-heights of Bethel to the cattle-troughs of Haran! What a cruel fall from the company of ascending and descending angels into the clutches of a finished rogue like Laban! Jacob had been all but carried up of angels from Bethel and taken into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; but, instead of that, he is taken down to Padan-aram, where he is cheated out of his wages, and cheated out of his wife, and cheated, and cheated, and cheated again, ten times cheated, and that too by his own mother's brother, till cheating came out of Jacob's nostrils, and stank in his eyes, and became hateful as hell to Jacob's heart. We say that Greek sometimes meets Greek. We say that diamond sometimes cuts diamond. We calculate the length of handle his spoon would need to have who sups with the devil. We speak about the seller being sold. And we quote David to the effect that to the froward God will show Himself froward; and Paul to the same effect, that as a man soweth so shall he reap. Yes. Other people had been cheating their fathers and

their brothers all these years as well as Rebekah and Jacob. Other little boys had been taking prizes in the devil's sly school besides Rebekah's favourite son. Laban, Rebekah's brother, and bone of her bone, had been making as pious speeches at Bethuel's blind bedside as ever Jacob made at Isaac's. And now that the actors are all ready, and the stage is all built, and the scenery is all hung up, all the world is invited in to see the serio-comedy of the Syrian biter bit, or Rebekah's poor lost sheep shorn to the bone by the steely shears of Shylock her brother. 'What is this that thou hast done unto me? Wherefore hast thou so beguiled me?'—Jacob appealed and remonstrated in his sweet, injured, salad innocence. Jacob had never seen or heard the like of it in his country. It shocked terribly and irrecoverably Jacob's inborn sense of right and wrong; it almost shook down Jacob's whole faith in the God of Bethel. And so still. We never see what wickedness there is in lies, and treachery, and cheatery, and injury of all kinds till we are cheated and lied against and injured ourselves. We will sit all our days and speak against our brother till some one comes and reports to us what they say who sit and speak against us. And then the whole blackness and utter abominableness of detraction and calumny and slander breaks out upon us, till we cut out our tongue rather than ever again so employ it. It was Jacob's salvation that he fell into the hands of that cruel land-shark, his uncle Laban. Jacob's salvation is somewhat nearer now than when he believed at Bethel; but, all the same, what is bred

in the bone is not got clean rid of in a day. It were laughable to a degree, if it were not so sad, to see Jacob, after all his smart, still peeling the stakes of poplar, and chestnut, and hazel where the cattle came to drink, till it came about that all the feebler births in the cattle-pens were Laban's and all the stronger were Jacob's. And till Laban had to give it up and to confess himself completely outwitted; and till he piously and affectionately proposed a covenant at Mizpah, saying, This pillar be witness that I will not pass over it to harm thee, nor thou to harm me.

Before we leave Laban and his enfeebled cattle, we take some excellent lessons away with us. And one of those excellent lessons is a lesson in the most perfect English style. The whole Laban episode is rich in gems of composition and expression. The Master of expression himself falls far below Moses more than once in these chapters. The prince in the *Tempest* is wine and water compared with Jacob. Even Burns has it better than Shakespeare:

> The man that lo'es his mistress weel
> Nae travel makes him weary.

But this is still better than either: 'Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her.' And there are other gems of the pen scattered lavishly about this same passage quite as good as that. Only, we are in quest to-night of better gems than gems of English, beautiful and rare and precious as they are.

We may emigrate our sons to the gold-fields of

South Africa, or to the cattle-ranches of America or Australia, and they may make such a fortune there as to be able to come home after we are no more, and build in the West-end, and educate their children in this capital of learning. But as long as Esau lives, as long as that man or that woman lives whom our son supplanted so long ago, he will build his house over a volcano, and will travel home to it with a trembling heart. And Jacob's heart often trembled and often stood still all the way of the wilderness from Haran to the Jabbok. Your son will send home secret instructions to some old class-fellow who is now at the top of the law to effect a peace, if not forgiveness and reconciliation, at any price. And so did Jacob. Jacob took a great herd of Laban's whitest cattle: goats, and camels, and kine, and everything he could think of, and sent herd after herd on beforehand so as to quench the embers of his brother's wrath. We have a like instance in that Highlander who, on hearing Robert Bruce inveighing in the High Kirk against those sins of which he knew himself to have been guilty, came up to the great preacher and said, 'I 'se gie thee twenty cows to gree God and me.' But, to Jacob's consternation, Esau never looked at those lowing, snow-white herds, but put on his armour in silence, and came posting north at the head of four hundred men. When Jacob's scouts returned and told him all that, he was in absolute desperation. Had he been alone it would have been easy. But, with all these women and children, and with all these cattle and other encumbrances, was there ever

a man taken in such a cruel trap! But he had still one whole night to count on before Esau could be at the Jabbok. And here is his prayer that night, preserved word for word to us his sons; his instant prayer after the scouts came back: 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed to Thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become these two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother Esau, lest he smite me, and the women with the children.' That is a fine sentence about the staff. It is points like that in a prayer and in a psalm that touch and take captive both God and man. That staff at the first had been a birthday gift from his twin-brother Esau. The cunning hunter had cut it out of the wood one day, and had carried home his snares and his venison slung over it on his shoulder. When he saw that Jacob envied it, Esau smoothed the stout branch better, and straightened it out, and carved E. and J. into a true lover's knot under the handle of it, and laid it beside Jacob's lentil dish on the morning of their double birthday. That staff felt like so much lead when Jacob took it into his hand to run from home; but he would need it, and, though it sometimes burned his hand to a red-hot cinder, somehow he never could throw it away. That staff stood sentinel over its dreaming master at Bethel, and with its help he waded the Jordan, and sprang the Jabbok, till he laid it down to water Rachel's sheep in Padan-aram. Jacob and his staff were a perfect proverb in Padan-aram. They were

never found separated. Jacob never felt alone when he had his staff in his hand; and many a time he was overheard talking to it, and it to him. And now, at the return to Jabbok, with that staff he made his prayer and praise to God, as if it had been some sacred instrument of a priest which had power with God. And, no doubt, we all have a staff, or a pen, or a ring, or book, or a Bible, or something or other that has gone with us through all our banishments, migrations, ups and downs in life, and when our hearts are soft and our prayers come upon us we again take that old companion by the hand. You will have a blue old cloak, like Newman's, or a brown old plaid that you bought while yet you were in your mother's house,—I have one,—and you feel sure that you could pit that old plaid with a story hanging at every single thrum and tassel of it, against Jacob's so-travelled staff any day. You will give orders that that old wrap is to be your winding-sheet; and you will wear it, with all its memories of judgment and of mercy, under your wedding garment in heaven. 'With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become these two bands.'

And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over all that he had. And when the night fell upon him Jacob was left alone. But now, who can tell how near Esau may be by this time! That cunning, cruel, revengeful man! Till, as the darkness fell so obscure, every plunge of the Jabbok, and every roar of the storm, made Jacob feel the smell of Esau's coat and the blow of his hairy

hand. Whether in the body, Jacob to the day of his death could never tell; or whether out of the body, Jacob could never tell; but such a night of terror and of battle no other man ever spent. It was Esau, and it was not Esau. It was God, and it was not God. It was both God and Esau; till Jacob to the day of his death could never tell Who the terrible Wrestler really was. Just before the morning broke, with one last wrench Jacob was left halt and lame for life. When, as if from the open heaven, he was baptized of the gracious Wrestler into a new name. For as He departed and the morning broke, the mysterious Man said to Jacob as he lay prostrate at His feet, Thou art henceforth no longer Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Jacob's new name is a great surprise to us. We would never have called Jacob a prince. There are many other names and titles and epithets we would have given to this overtaken son of Isaac and Rebekah; this broken brother of Esau, whose sins have so found him out. But God proclaims Jacob ever after the Jabbok none of our names, but a prince. And for this reason. Prayer, such prayer as Jacob prayed that night, is the princeliest act any man can possibly perform. The noblest, the grandest, the boldest, the most magnificent act a human being can perform on this earth is to pray; to pray, that is, as Jacob prayed at Peniel. No man is a prince with God all at once; no, nor after many years. Few men—one here and another

there—ever come to any princeliness at all, either in their prayers or in anything else. Jacob had twenty years, and more, of sin and of sorrow, of remorse and of repentance, of gratitude for such a miraculous past, and of beaten-back effort after a better life, and then, to crown all, he had that unparalleled night of fear and prayer at the Jabbok; a night's work such that even the Bible has nothing else like it till our Lord's night in Gethsemane,—and it is only after all that, and far more than Moses with all his honesty and all his subtlety has told us,—it is only then that Jacob is proclaimed of God a prince with God. You must understand that prayer, to be called prayer, is not what you hear people all about you calling prayer. That is not prayer. Jacob's thigh was out of joint, and our Lord's sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Prayer is colossal work. There were giants in those days. Prayer takes all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, and all our mind, and all our life, sleeping and waking. Prayer is the princeliest, the noblest, the most unearthly act on this side heaven. Only pray, then; only pray aright, and enough, and it will change your whole nature as it changed Jacob's. Till, from the meanest, the falsest, the most treacherous, the most deceitful, the most found-out, and the most miserable of men, it will make you also a very prince with God and with men. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help!

XVIII

JOSEPH

THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH

JOSEPH, the future ruler of Egypt, was the late-born and the greatly-beloved son of Jacob and Rachel. Joseph inherited all his mother's proverbial gracefulness and sweetness and attractive beauty. And then Joseph's intellectual gifts were such that, taken along with the purity and the nobility of his character, they lifted him up out of a pit, and out of a prison, and set him in a seat of power and of honour scarcely second to the seat of Pharaoh himself. At the same time Joseph climbed up to that high seat through many great risks and out of many great sufferings; and he ran some of the greatest of those risks at the hand of his too-doting father. Were it not that our own hearts so continually condemn us, we would turn on Jacob with indignation for his mischievous treatment of Joseph. Can Jacob have forgotten the sea of trouble into which his father's favouritism, and his mother's indulgence, cast both themselves and their children? The woful harvest of all that long past folly is still making both Jacob's life and

many other lives as bitter as death to this day; and yet here is Jacob poisoning the whole of his family life also, and spoiling Joseph, just as Isaac and Rebekah had spoiled and poisoned their own and their children's lives when Jacob and Esau were still their children. We would denounce Jacob for his insane treatment of Joseph were it not that we are all ourselves repeating sins and follies every day from which we and our families have suffered for generations.

Joseph's coat of many colours was like to have been his winding-sheet, such was the envy and the hatred of his half-brothers at Rachel's well-favoured, richly-talented, and over-ornamented son. 'Our coats be of one colour; so should his,' grumbled Dan, and all Dan's brothers agreed with his spiteful and angry words. The patriarchs, moved with envy, says Stephen in the Acts, sold Joseph into Egypt. And Jacob, on his death-bed, when he was blessing Joseph, said of him that the archers had hated him, and had shot their arrows at him, and had sorely wounded him. It is usual for mankind, says Josephus on the text, to envy their nearest relatives and their best friends for their eminence and for their prosperity. And yet, if Dan would but wait a little, and would but command himself a little, the brightness will soon begin to fade out of his brother's many-coloured coat. Let a short season run and there will be nothing to pain Dan's eye and to wring and heat his heart. Some other fond father will soon begin to clothe his spoiled son in a coat full of more and

more brilliant colours than Joseph's coat; till Joseph's coat will be so eclipsed that he also will join the archers' ranks, and will shoot at his rival with their envious arrows. Another author will soon rise and will take the public taste. His new books will soon be on every table, and his new name in every mouth, till that success which so galls you to-day will be completely forgotten by you and forgiven. His crowded pews will before long begin to thin out, and new orators will spring up and will attract and draw off that preacher's painful crowd. And if none of these considerations will quiet Dan's evil eye, and if he really feels his eye to be an evil and a wicked and a murderous eye, let him take his evil eye to God. To whom else can such an eye as that be taken? Let him lift his so sorely stung eye up to Joseph's God. Ask the God of love to consider you and to pity you. Ask Him not to spurn and spit on you. Ask Him to be merciful to your secret and incessant misery. Shut your door on God and yourself, and on your knees ask Him still to add to your brother's goodliness, and to his talents, and to his honour, and to his happiness, and to his usefulness; if only He will anoint your eyes with enough love, and if only He will take out of your eyes that same evil light that glanced so murderously in the patriarchs' eyes as often as they again saw Joseph in his shining coat. Importune Him to enable you to love Joseph, till you enjoy, as if they were your own, those so many and so shining colours of his coat. If ever Almighty God has wrought that salvation in Dan, or in any of Dan's brothers on

this side the new Jerusalem, ask Him, for Christ's sake, to do it a little to you.

Joseph was only seventeen years old when his two so intoxicating dreams came to him. You must always recall Joseph's unripe age, and his complete inexperience, before you blame him too much for the way he talked about his prerogatives and prospects of greatness. The time will come when all Joseph's splendid achievements, and all his matchless honour and glory, will not make Joseph open a lip about himself. But he was only seventeen as yet, and he had never been for an hour out of his father's flattering sight. And thus it was that Joseph's future modesty, and humility, and self-command, and knowledge of other men's hearts, and thoughtfulness for other men's feelings and temptations, had not yet begun to come to him. Had Joseph been but a little older, and had he been but once or twice at Dothan, he would have hidden his dreams in his heart like so many guilty secrets. But, innocent child that he was, he must up and out of his bed, and tell all his dreams to all the house. And so intent was he in what so much interested himself that he did not see the ugly looks on the faces of his brothers. And, like Joseph, till we are well past seventeen, and have been for some time away from home, we talk about nothing else but our own dreams also. Other men dreamed last night as well as we, but they never get their mouths open where we are. We talk the whole table down. We have just come home from the pulpit, or from the platform, or from the desk, or from the instru-

ment, or from a visit, or from an entertainment, or from what not, and our vain hearts are full. We never think that all the other people at table are as full of themselves as we are. We never see that they also are bursting to get at the only topic that interests them, which is not at all the same topic that so interests us. We mistake that silence and that suspense. We think that all that silence and all that suspense means that all our audience are as full of our interests as we are ourselves, and are waiting to hear us. While all the time, they can scarcely command themselves with weariness and disgust. Be sure your company is as full of you as you are of yourself before you again give the reins to your galloping tongue. Be sure that they all worship you. Be sure that you are their god. Be sure that they are all your wife and children. Be sure that they have no interests, or occupations, or vanities of their own. Be sure of all their love and devotion and patience. In short, be sure that you are in heaven before you keep the whole house waiting to break their fast till you have told out to the end all your dreams of last night. And it came to pass that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of many colours, that was upon him. And they took him and cast him into a pit, and then they sat down to eat bread. Is that another subtlety of Moses? Does Moses insinuate that Joseph's brothers had never till now sat down to eat bread in entire peace since the day that Joseph began to dream? With all their faults, Joseph would have been eating bread at that moment with

the patriarchs but for his spotted coat and his irrepressible dreams. I overheard a conversation something like this not long ago: 'Shall we ask him to dinner, and invite So-and-so to meet him?' 'No, I think not.' 'Why?' 'Why? Because the last time he was with us he talked two mortal hours about himself, till everybody but himself must have seen contempt and disgust written as plain as day on every face. No. But if only he were not so full of himself, what a welcome guest he would be! And with such talents, and with such a position, what might he not do!'

There are some men, on the other hand, whom you can never waylay into once opening their lips about themselves. Two such men stand out enviably and honourably to me in my acquaintance. And they are just the two men in all my acquaintance I would most like to hear on themselves. But, no. Never they. Whether it is pride—I sometimes think it is; or whether it is scorn of their company—as it may well be; or whether it is absence of mind, or age, or experience, or knowledge of the hearts of men, till they will not commit themselves to men, I am sometimes divided; but, be it what it may, I never yet saw either of them take up a single moment of Joseph's time. There is such a thing as having too much of a good thing. And there is a golden mean in this matter also, if Joseph from the one side, and my two friends from the other side, could only strike it.

That dreadful pit in Dothan was the beginning of Joseph's salvation. The first night he spent in

that pit recalled to Joseph's mind what his father had often told him of his first night from home, as also of that other night at the Jabbok. And as Joseph lay in that horrible pit, and dreamed and prayed, behold, the very same ladder of Bethel is let down into the bottom of the pit. 'I am the Lord God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob thy father. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. For I will not leave thee till I have done all that which I have spoken to thee of.' And, all that night after, Joseph could think of nothing else but the sins of his youth; his vanity, his proud superiority and superciliousness to his brothers, his evil reports concerning his brothers, his talkativeness about himself, and all the temptations and provocations into which he had led his brothers. That deep pit was brimful of such remorseful thoughts and prayers, when Judah appeared at its mouth with cords and grappling irons to draw Joseph up to the daylight. But it was only to kill him with a far worse death; for that morning Joseph was sold to the Midianite slave-dealers of Egypt for twenty pieces of silver. Twenty pieces of silver was Joseph's whole price that day in Dothan. Those who know Joseph's after-history will flash forward their minds, and will contrast the Prime Minister of Pharaoh with that slave lad sold for that paltry price at the mouth of that pit that day. And, to-morrow, when you buy an apprentice, or a message boy, of his widowed mother for five shillings a week, think of Joseph for a moment, and say to yourself, Who knows what

the future may have in store for my message boy and for me? Who knows how I may go down, while he goes up? Who knows the talents of God that may lie hidden in that friendless boy? Who knows what place he may be predestined to fill in the church and in the world? And even if he comes to nothing of all that; if he never becomes a great man, yet, even so, such thoughts, such imaginations, such forecasts will help you to treat him well, and will help to make you a good man and a good master, whatever your slave-boy may come, or may not come, to be.

The good work that the pit in Dothan began in Joseph, those still more terrible days and nights on the way down to Egypt carried on. Lashed to the loaded side of a huge cane-waggon, and himself loaded with the baggage of Gilead for the Egyptian market, Joseph toiled on under the mid-day sun, thankful to be left alone of his churlish masters in the red-hot air. Put yourself in Joseph's place. The fondling of his father; a child on whom no wind was ever let blow, and no sun was ever let strike; with servants to wait on his every wish, and to dress and anoint him for every meal; with loving looks and fond words falling continually upon him from the day he was born; and now, lashed to the side of a slave caravan, and with the whistling whip of his Ishmaelite owner laid on his shoulder till he sank in the sand. But you must add this to the picture, else you will not have the picture complete: 'The Lord was with Joseph, and Joseph found grace in the sight of the Lord.' Yes, the Lord was

more with Joseph, more and better far, than ever He had been as long as Joseph was the spoiled child of his father, and the continual snare of his brothers. And there are young men in this city suffering hardships and persecutions in workshops and in offices as sore to bear as was Joseph's load of labour and ill-usage of the Ishmaelites. And the Lord is with them also as He never was so long as they were spoilt sons at home, getting all things their own way. And as they silently and prayerfully take up their cross daily, and wait out the will of God, they are thereby putting off a past that would have been their sure destruction—and had almost been—and are preparing themselves for a future as sure, and as full of the providence of God, as ever was Joseph's future. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever; but, though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. 'How many saints,' William Law rejoices, 'has adversity sent to heaven! And how many poor sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery! This man had never been debauched, but for his fortune and advancement; that had never been pious, but through his poverty and disgrace. She that is envied for her beauty may perchance owe all her misery to it; and another may be for ever happy

for having no admirers of her person. One man succeeds in everything, and so loses all; another meets with nothing but crosses and disappointments, and thereby gains more than all the world is worth.'

Even if Potiphar paid thirty or even forty pieces of silver for his Hebrew slave, we know now what a good bargain he got that day. For that handful of silver the captain of Pharaoh's guard came into possession of all the splendid talents that lay hid in Joseph's greatly gifted mind, and all the magnificent moral character the first foundations of which had been laid in the pit in Dothan, and had been built up in God every step of the long wilderness journey. All Joseph's deep repentance also, and all his bitter remorse; all his self-discovery, and all his self-condemnation; with all his reticence and all his continence,—Potiphar took all that home from the slave-market that day in exchange for his handful of Egyptian silver. Joseph was now to be plunged into the most corrupt society that rotted in that age on the face of the earth. And had he not come into that pollution straight out of a sevenfold furnace of sanctifying sorrow, Joseph would no more have been heard of. The sensuality of Egypt would have soon swallowed him up. But his father's God was with Joseph. The Lord was with Joseph to protect him, to guide him, and to give him the victory. The Lord was with him to more imprisonment, and then to more promotion; to more and more honour, and place, and power, till this world had no more to bestow upon Joseph.

And, through it all, Joseph became a better and an ever better man all his days. A nobler and an ever nobler man. A more and more trustworthy, and a more and more trusted and consulted man. More and more loyal to truth and to duty. More and more chaste, temperate, patient, enduring, forgiving; full of mind and full of heart; and full, no man ever fuller, of a simple and a sincere piety and praise of God, till he became a very proverb both in the splendour of his services, and in the splendour of his rewards.

XIX

AARON

IS NOT AARON THE LEVITE THY BROTHER? I KNOW THAT HE CAN SPEAK WELL

WHAT a gifted house! What an honour to that man of the house of Levi who took to wife a daughter of Levi! What a rich slave-hut was that with Miriam and Aaron and Moses all born of God into it! What splendid wages to have three such children given to that son and daughter of Levi to nurse up for the Lord, and for Israel, and for all the world; three such goodly children as Miriam the prophetess, and Aaron the high priest, and Moses the deliverer and leader and lawgiver of Israel. Has there ever been another house gifted like that house in Goshen on the face of the earth? I have not heard or read of another house in all the world like the house of Amram of the house of Levi, and his wife God-my-glory. And, then, the sovereign distribution and allotment of their gifts and their graces and their offices, the dividing-out of the family genius, was no less wonderful than the immense amount of it. For, by that sovereign

division and distribution Moses was made the first and the greatest of all the prophets of Israel. Aaron, again, must have been the most eloquent of all eloquent men, since the fame of his eloquence had reached up to heaven itself till it was acknowledged and talked of and boasted about there. What oratory must Aaron's oratory have been when God Himself both felt and confessed its power. I know, said the Divine Voice, that he can speak well. And, then, Miriam, in sacred drama, in sacred dance, in sacred song, and in sacred instruments of music, was quite worthy to stand out beside her two unapproachable brothers. While, all the time, each several one of the three was all the more dependent on the other two just because of the greatness of his own and her own special gift. The very magnitude of their own gifts made the others' gifts more necessary to them, till the whole house of Amram was a complete and a rounded and a perfect gift of God to all Israel. And till all that Israel could ever need as a nation and as a church, as fathers and as mothers, as masters and as servants, as slaves and as redeemed from slavery, as sinners and as the chosen people of God—all Israel was complete in Moses and Aaron and Miriam, even as they also were complete in God and in one another. Yes, indeed, what a highly honoured house was the house of that son and daughter of Levi, Amram and God-her-glory.

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent. Neither heretofore nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; but I am slow of

speech and of a slow tongue. It was the depth and the weight and the fulness of Moses' mind that made him a man of such slow speech and of such a slow tongue. Moses had lived so long alone in Horeb that he had well-nigh forgotten the every-day language of every-day men. He had been so much alone with God that he felt like a man away from home when he met again with any man of many words. He had taken the shoes off his feet so often before God that he never could put them on again or walk in them with any ease or any freedom before men. I Am! was all that God had said to Moses, year after year, as Moses fed the flock of his father-in-law in the mount of God. And, who am I? was all that Moses answered God for forty years. Moses was a great philosopher, says Matthew Henry, and a great statesman, and a great divine, and yet he was no orator. And one great statesman of England speaking of another great statesman, says of him, He was without any power to be called oratory, and yet I never heard a man speak in the House of Commons who had so much power over the House. He had those great qualities that govern men, and that has far more influence in the House of Commons than the most brilliant flights of fancy, or the keenest wits. But, better than all his great philosophy and great statesmanship, Moses was a great divine, the greatest of Old Testament divines; the greatest because the first of all divines. And yet he was no preacher, as we say. In this Moses was somewhat like certain of our own great divines. They have such a depth and weight

of matter that they also are slow of speech and of a slow style. Butler for one, and Foster for another. Whereas certain others of our great divines are like Aaron in this, that they can speak well. And yet we have sometimes heard of great divines and great preachers too who shrank back from the pulpit as much as Moses himself shrank. The call of Isaiah, and the call of Jeremiah, and the call of Calvin, and the call of Knox, and the call of Bruce all remind us of Moses' noble modesty, his fear of his office, his fear of himself, and of his fellow-men. And the Lord said to Moses, 'Who hath made man's voice? Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.'

Cato the Censor defined a great orator to be nothing else than a good man well skilled in speaking. And Quintilian, in his *Institutes of Oratory*, has a noble passage on the great Roman's great text. Let all our young orators, and, especially, let all our sacred and Aaronic orators, study the delightful *Institutes*, that perfect treasure-house of ancient letters, ancient wisdom, and ancient truth and beauty. Now, Aaron was one of Cato's good men skilled in speaking. We are sure of that, because for Aaron's goodness as a man we have not only his long lifetime in the most sacred of all services, but also the psalmist's testimony that Aaron, with all his great trespass, was a great saint of God. And, besides, for his great skilfulness in speaking we have the great certificate of the Divine

Voice itself. The sword had entered Aaron's soul also. The iron furnace of Egypt had been burning for long in Aaron's covenant heart also. But when Aaron looked at the tremendous and impossible task of delivering Israel out of Egypt, he felt that he was helpless and hopeless. At the same time, he felt sure that if there was a man on the face of the earth made of God on special purpose for such a service, it was just his own banished brother Moses. And thus it was that Aaron set out to Horeb to seek for Moses just at the moment when the bush began to burn on Horeb, and when the Lord began to speak to Moses out of the bush. 'Behold, Aaron thy brother cometh forth to meet thee, and when he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak to him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with his mouth and with thy mouth, and will teach you both what you shall both do. And he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.' And Aaron went and met Moses in the mount of God. And Aaron kissed Moses, and Moses told Aaron all that the Lord had said concerning him, till Aaron answered, and shrank back, and said: Surely it is not so. Surely the Lord did not so speak concerning me. I speak well! I speak for thee, my brother! I am not worthy to unloose thy shoe-latchet. I am not worthy to be of the same name with thee. I should always sit silent. I should never speak. My tongue will not tame. I need thee, my brother. I need thy wisdom. I need thy patience. I need thy

counsel. I need thy command. Thou art the wisest and the best of men. Thou art a king in Israel. Moses, my dear brother! While all the time Moses felt more than ever before how all this must be of God. For even as Aaron so spake, Moses saw to his delight that Aaron had always the right word ready. No man could resist Aaron. No man could refuse Aaron. Pharaoh himself would not be able to resist and refuse Aaron. Moses felt beside Aaron that he would never open his mouth again. The right word always went away, somehow, when Moses opened his mouth to speak. Whereas Aaron had but to open his mouth and the right word always came out of his mouth. Till, with Aaron beside him, Moses felt that he could face without fear of failure both all Israel and Pharaoh with all his priests and all his magicians.

Now, as we have already seen, we have always had men among ourselves more or less like Moses, and other men more or less like Aaron. Men like Moses—that is, men of great originality, and of great depth and grasp and strength of mind. And yet men who have been of a stammering tongue. Carlyle has made Cromwell's 'mute veracity' noble and venerable to us to all time, and Lord Acton has told us that Dr. Döllinger knew too much to write much. On the other hand, what are those men to do, who, like Aaron, have no such depth, and grasp, and originality, and productivity of mind as Moses and the great thinkers and great scholars of our race have had? A common man and a man of no gifts may be set in a place, and may have a calling

of God that he cannot escape—a place and a calling which demand constant speaking and constant teaching at his hands. A minister, for instance. He may not be a great scholar or a great thinker himself, but he is set over those who are still less scholars, and who think still less. Now, what is such a man to do? What, but just to take Moses instead of God. What, but just to find out those great divines and other great authors who have been so immediately and so richly gifted of God, and to live with them, and work with them, and make them his own, just as if God had given him all the great gifts He has given them. If I am a man of no learning and no originality, then I know men, both living and dead, who are; and they are all that, of God, and under God, for me. And, if I had to travel barefoot to Horeb for them; if I had to sell my bed for them, at any cost I would have them. I would take no rest till I had found them, and then, as God said of Aaron, I would be glad when I saw them, and I would kiss them, and claim them as my own. We are not all the men of Moses-like genius and originality we might like to be. We are not all epoch-making, history-making, nation-making men. But we are what we are. We are what God has made us to be; and Moses himself is no more. And Moses may be as glad to meet me in my teachableness and in my love and in my reverence as I am to meet him in his magnificent supremacy and high solitariness of gift and of office. Yes; and who knows what our Master may graciously say to us after He has rewarded Moses for his

magnificent talents and for his magnificent services? One thing is sure: we shall be satisfied with what He shall say to us, and we shall have no room left in our hearts wherewith any more to envy Moses for his god-like gifts and for his god-like services.

All went well with Aaron as long as he had Moses beside him to inspire him, and to support him, and to be to him instead of God. Aaron faced the elders of Israel, and scattered all their objections and all their fears as a rushing mighty wind scatters chaff; and the long struggle with Pharaoh and with his magicians has surely been preserved to us by Aaron's eloquent pen. The crossing of the Red Sea also, Mount Sinai, and the giving of the tabernacle and the law—it has certainly been by some one who could both speak well and write well also that all that wonderful piece has been put into our hands. And, whatever part Aaron and Aaron's great gifts may have had in all that, at any rate, all went well with Aaron through all that. Aaron did splendid service through all that, and both his great name and his great service would have gone on growing in love and in honour to the end if only he had never let Moses out of his sight. But always when Moses was for any length of time out of sight, Aaron was a reed shaken with the wind; he was as weak and as evil as any other man. Those forty days that Moses was away on the Mount brought out, among other things, both Moses' strength and greatness and Aaron's littleness and weakness in a way that nothing else could have done. 'Up, make us gods, which shall go

before us; for, as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him.' And Aaron went down like a broken reed before the idolatrous and licentious clamour of the revolted people. A man may be able to speak well when all men's ears are open to him, and when all men's hands are clapping to what he says, who is yet a very weak man, and a very helpless man, and a very mischievous man in a time of storm and strain and shipwreck. A man may be, if not one of Cato's orators, yet a great favourite with the multitude, who has no real root in himself. He may speak well under sufficient applause who has no nobility of character, and no strength of will, and no backbone or brow of courage, and no living and abiding faith in God and in the truth of God. It has often been seen, both in sacred, and in profane, and in contemporary history, how soon the man of a merely emotional, impulsive, oratorical temperament goes to the wall in the hour of real trial. It is popular clamour, and the dividing and receding wave of popular support, that tries a true statesman's strength. The loud demands and the angry threats of the excited people soon serve to discover whether the wonted leader is really able and really worthy to lead or no. And men of the oratorical order have so often flinched and failed in the hour of action and of suffering that our eloquent men are apt to be too lightly esteemed. The love of popularity, and the absolute necessity to have the multitude with him, is a terrible temptation to that leader of men and of movements in the church and in the state who has the gift of

popular speech, and who loves to employ it. What would the people like me to say to them on that subject? Will they crowd to hear it? How will they take it? And what will be said about what I have said after I have said it and cannot unsay it? And, in my heart of hearts, can I let them go? Shall I not tune my pulpit just a touch or two, so as to attract this man, and so as to keep that other man from going away? Moses had his own temptations and snares that even he did not always escape and overcome; but it was the good speaker's temptation, it was the popular preacher's temptation, that led Aaron into the terrible trespass of the golden calf.

There is a fine sermon by the finest of English preachers under this fine title—'Saintliness not forfeited by the penitent.' And though that unique preacher, after his provoking manner, gives with the one hand and takes away with the other all through that fine sermon, at the same time the sermon is full of subtle truth and exquisite beauty. No; by the true penitent neither saintliness nor service is ever forfeited. Blessed be God, both saintliness and service too are, in such a case, only the better secured and the more fruitfully employed. But then, in order to either saintliness or service being preserved and maintained in a penitent, his penitence must be of the very best kind. It must be penitence indeed. It must be a breaking, burning, consuming, and ever-deepening life of penitence, and that, too, both before God and man. And it was because Aaron's penitence was at once

so saintly, and so laid out in service, that we hear so little, and in as many words, about it. We would be nearer the truth about Aaron if we put him at the very head of all Old Testament penitents, both for his own sins and for the sins of all other men. Luther speaks with Isaiah-like boldness when he says that Jesus Christ, by reason of the law of imputation, was the greatest sinner that ever was. Now, Aaron had to be Jesus Christ till Jesus Christ came. And while Aaron was Jesus Christ in type and by imputation, at the same time, and to give the uttermost reality and the uttermost intensity to that, he was himself Aaron all the time, Aaron of the golden calf and of many other untold transgressions besides. And you may be quite sure that Aaron never slew a sacrifice for sin that he did not lay the golden calf, and the nakedness, and the dancing, and the shame, and all the never-to-be-forgotten sin upon its bleeding head. You may be quite sure that Aaron never went into the holy place any day for the sin of others till he had gone first for his own sin. You may rely upon it that many an Israelite whose sin had found him out had a prayer offered for him and for his case at the altar such that the penitent never knew where all the compassion, and all the sympathy, and all the humility, and all the holiness, and all the harmlessness of his high priest came from. Little did the penitents in Israel think how much of his high priesthood Aaron had put on under Sinai and on the scene of that idolatrous and licentious revelry. Moses in his anger had ground the golden calf to ashes, and had

sprinkled the ashes on the waters of the brook that ran down out of the Mount of God, till all the people drank of the sin-laden water. And to this day the children of Israel have a saying to this effect,—that when any terrible judgment of God, or any great remorse, or any great repentance comes upon them there is always an ounce of the ashes of the golden calf in it. And Aaron kept in the holy place, and beside the pot of manna and the rod that budded, a silver chest full of that same accursed ashes, and out of which chest he always sprinkled, and with many tears, all that he ate and all that he drank on every returning day of atonement. By these things priests pray, by these things prophets preach, by these things psalmists sing, and by things like these there comes to all sinful men the best life of their souls. John Foxe used to declare that both he and his people had got much more good out of his sins than ever either he or they had got out of his good works. And, though they did not know it, and would not have believed it, the penitents in Israel got far more good out of their high priest's trespass in the matter of the golden calf, than ever they got out of his broidered garments, and his silver bells, and his fair mitre upon his head.

XX

MIRIAM

AARON AND MOSES, AND MIRIAM THEIR SISTER

WATCH well, Miriam, and never let thine eyes off that ark of bulrushes. Watch that little ark with all thy wit, for no other maiden shall ever have such another watch till the fulness of time, when another Miriam shall watch over another child still more fair to God. Of those born of women only One shall ever be greater than thy little brother away down there among the flags by the river's brink. Watch well, Miriam, the brink of the river, and that ark among its waters, and thou shalt not want thy wages. For far greater riches are hidden in that little ark than all the treasures of Egypt. The civilisation and the sanctification of the whole earth is in thy keeping; the law and the prophets to come; the very Lion of the tribe of Judah Himself and all His kingdom, are all under thine eye to-day. O highly favoured Miriam, the sister of Moses. Only perform thy part well, and wherever this gospel shall be preached in the

whole world, there shall this also that thou art doing be told for a memorial of thee!

What a witty little woman did Moses' sister prove herself to be that day! If it was all out of her own head, what a quick-witted little prophetess she was already! 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?' And then, ye mothers among us, what amazing self-control that was in God-my-glory, the mother of Miriam and Moses. Just the proper proportion, and just the perfect mean, between a nurse's paid love for a foundling, and a mother's love for her own restored child. Could you have so hardened your heart till you got him home? And could you have always been on your guard to hold him at arm's length when an Egyptian neighbour came near as Moses' Hebrew nurse did? A mother worthy of prophets, and priests, and prophetesses; and, best of all, God-her-glory!

By the next time we see Miriam, Moses and Aaron and Miriam are at the head of the children of Israel. All Israel under their leadership have escaped out of the land of Egypt, and are standing on the shore of the Red Sea singing the praises of the Lord like the sound of many waters. By this time Miriam herself is a prophetess, and is able to take the foremost place in the women's sacred songs and sacred dances. Some sharp-eyed scholars who are able to read between the lines assure us that they see tokens of Aaron and of his eloquence in the triumphant song that Miriam took down from Aaron's lips and taught to the devout and talented

women, till Aaron and Miriam, with Moses so proudly looking on, made that day a day to be remembered for its songs and for its dances, as well as for its great deliverance, in the house of Israel. And we have the promise that if we flee from Egypt, and do not return to it, we ourselves also shall one day join Moses and Aaron and Miriam on the sea of glass, where, with the harps of God in our hands, we shall all sing together the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. For Thou hast brought them in, Thou hast planted them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.

But for her brother's marriage, Miriam would have been the sovereign woman in all Israel for all her days. But Moses' marriage was more than Miriam could bear. Miriam had been Moses' sister, and his mother, and his closest companion, and his most confidential friend now for forty years. Miriam had sat at the council-table with Moses and Aaron and the assembled elders of Israel. What Moses and Aaron were to the one half of the people, Miriam the sister of Moses was to the other half. Miriam was the first famous woman in Israel who had borne the honourable and universal name of a mother in Israel. And, but for Moses' marriage Miriam would have shone beside Moses till her eye also was not dim, nor her natural strength abated.

But Moses' marriage made Miriam as weak and as evil and as wicked as any weak and evil and wicked woman in all the camp. Set me as a seal upon thine heart! Miriam cried to Moses, in a storm of tears, when she saw the Ethiopian woman coming to take her place. Set me as a seal upon thine arm! For love is strong as death. Jealousy is cruel as the grave. The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. What a life of torment did Miriam live in those days because of Moses' marriage! Her heart was full of hell-fire at Moses' innocent wife and innocent children, and even at her meek and innocent brother himself. Till her wild jealousy kindled her wild pride, and her wild pride her wild, insane, and impious envy, and then her insane and impious envy soon led her into her fatal trespass against Moses and against God.

Aaron had great gifts of the intellectual kind, and he performed great services both of that and of the spiritual kind; but Aaron had little or no strength of character. Aaron could speak well when some stronger man inspired him and held him up, but that was all. Aaron never had much mind of his own. He was always weak in his will. He was easily caught up, easily tossed about, and easily swept away. His two great trespasses were at bottom not his own trespasses at all. In the one case it was the idolatrous and rebellious people, and in this case it was his envious and rebellious sister. We have not a thousandth part of what Miriam said to Aaron. There are days, and nights, and weeks, and years of insinua-

tion, and suspicion, and wounded pride, and gnawing envy all gathered up into a few words, as the manner of Scripture is. 'Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses?' Miriam demanded of Aaron. 'Hath He not also spoken by us?' And Aaron had pride enough and ambition enough and envy enough smouldering in his own heart, that when Miriam blew long enough upon it, Aaron's heart also burned up into an answering flame. And all the time Moses was not blind. Moses was not deaf. And Moses' wife was not a stock nor a stone, though she was not a prophetess. And no little shame and pain—great distress and great and sore sorrow—was seen of the Lord in Moses' tent because of Miriam's abominable injustice and cruelty. But, all the time, Moses her brother was as if he were a deaf man who heard not, and a dumb man who openeth not his mouth. My lovers, said David, and my friends stand aloof from me, and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me; when my foot slippeth they magnify themselves against me. For yet my prayer also shall be for them in their infirmities. And the Lord heard it. And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam—Come out, ye three, unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. Look at them. Pity them. Pray for them. Moses the leader and lawgiver of Israel, and Aaron the high priest, and

Miriam the prophetess, and all Israel looking after them in terror, and the anger of the Lord kindling round about them. That is the wages of Miriam's sin begun. That is the fruit of all her envy, and insinuation, and detraction, and slander against her brother and her brother's wife. And that in Aaron is what comes of weakness and softness and easiness under temptation. Aaron feels now the full shame of letting Miriam come to his tent and sit and whisper and backbite, when he should have turned her to the door, prophetess and all. How they both wish now that he had! And the Lord called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forth. What was it that ye two so sat and spake against your brother? In what had he hurt you? In what had he taken any word of Mine out of your mouth? In what had he failed in all his duty to Me? My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow. And Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. And for seven days and seven nights Miriam was shut out of the camp of Israel, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

Look well at Miriam, all you envious and evil-spoken women. Look back at Miriam's beginning. Look at her watching the ark of bulrushes. Look at her nursing her little brother in the house of her godly mother. Look at her in her rapture, like one out of the body with the joy of the Lord, at the Red Sea. And now see to what her wicked

heart and her wicked tongue have brought her. Look at her with her hand upon her throat, and with a linen cloth upon her lip, and with her hoarse, sepulchral, noisome voice wandering far from the camp, and compelled to cry Unclean! Unclean! when any one came in sight. Look at all men fleeing from her. Look at her hiding her shame all day behind the sandhills of the wilderness, and coming out at night to look at the lights in Moses' tent and in Aaron's tabernacle. Look, O envy-filled men and women, look at your mother with her flesh half consumed upon her as if she had been seven days dead. Go out and walk all night with her. Go out and hide all day with her. Go out and cry her cry, all you who cannot endure to see or to hear the honours, and the successes, and the services, and the calling, and the gifts of God in your brother. Go out; your true place is not here. Your true place is outside the gates of all good and honest men. Your heart is hard and dry, and like a leper's dead body. You very voice is hoarse as with the asthma of hell.

What a week that was in the camp of Israel! How many thoughts of how many hearts were that week revealed! Miriam's thoughts of her heart were that week revealed. For seven days and seven nights she dwelt alone among the multitude of her own miserable, remorseful, despairing thoughts. What all her thoughts were that week let him tell us who is the chief of sinners, and whose sin has found him out to public exposure and public outcasting. What Aaron's thoughts were as he

exercised his office on his sister, and pronounced it leprosy, and passed sentence upon her, and hurried her out of the camp, and shut the gate upon her—what Aaron's thoughts all that week were let him tell us who has had to bear witness against, and to sentence, and to execute judgment on some one in whose sin he himself had been a partaker. I tell you the lepers in Israel had extra-tender treatment at Aaron's hands ever after that awful week. I would like much to know what Moses' wife's thoughts were all that week. Her thoughts, I mean, about her banished sister-in-law. If I knew her thoughts that week on that subject, I would know then to a certainty whether Moses had married well or no. I would know then whether Miriam had any good reason and justification for resisting her brother's marriage. I would know then whether the Lord God had made that Ethiopian woman an help meet for Moses. I would know then whether she was black, but comely, and whether she was a good minister's wife or no. Was she glad in her heart when she heard of Miriam's leprosy? Did she laugh behind the door like Sarah? Did she say, Let her rot in the wilderness, for she deserves it? Was she sad all the eighth day and night after Miriam had been healed? Or, did she go up to the court of the Ethiopians, and there importune her brother Aaron to importune his God on behalf of his sister? Did she look out at the gate many times every day all that week, but could never see or hear Miriam for weeping? Did she buy the two birds for the cleansing of a leper with her own

money, and did she have them all ready with her own hands for days before Aaron could as yet take Miriam back? I do not know. I do not read. Only, I know that the thoughts of no woman's heart in all Israel were more revealed all that week than the thoughts of that Ethiopian woman, Moses' much-injured wife. I can well believe that was the best week for the whole house of Israel till that week came when a Greater than Moses and Aaron and Miriam all put together suffered without the gate for their envy and for all their other trespasses. I can believe that that week's halt did more to secure and to hasten their subsequent march through the wilderness than a year of their best roads and their best weather. I can well believe that we have many psalms and the seeds of many psalms out of that fruitful week. I can easily believe that many future judges and prophets and priests in Israel were inquiring and thinking children for the first time that stand-still week. Why are we standing still? they would ask. Where is Miriam all this week? Why is Aaron always so sad? Why is Moses always walking alone? Why is my mother always weeping so? And why, when the seventh day came to a close, was there such gladness again? Imagine for yourselves the questions and the answers in every tent in Israel that week. Imagine the wise answers, and the foolish answers, and the silences, and the embraced and the lost opportunities. Imagine the young minds that would open that week, and the young hearts that would break for the first time, and begin to bleed for sin for the first time,

that week. It was that week!—they would often say after they were home in the promised land—it was that week in the wilderness!

Miriam did not live long after that week. It was not her age, and was not the dregs of the leprosy. Miriam died of a broken heart. All the sprinklings, and all the bathings, and all the thanksgivings, and all the benedictions of Aaron her brother; and all the love, and honour, and trust, and confidence of Moses her other brother; and all the sisterly tenderness of Moses' wife; and all the sports, and plays, and leaps, and laughters of Moses' children—all could not heal Miriam's broken heart. Miriam's name is never heard of again in Israel. From that week Miriam blotted herself out of all her brother's books. Miriam died to Israel and to all the world in the lazar-house of Hazeroth. Miriam's songs and dances were all past. Not even on the Sabbath-day would Miriam leave her weeping tent. Unclean! Unclean! If you would ever see or hear Miriam now you must venture and go out of the gate to where the lepers sit solitary, and where they follow the camp afar off. That is Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Moses and Aaron, who is taking out meat and medicine and linen for the lips of the lepers. She is sitting down with them. She is talking to them. She is telling them all about herself. She is pledging herself to speak to Aaron her brother for them. She will buy the two birds on her way home after dark. No. It was not years. And it was not sickness. But Miriam soon died. And Miriam sleeps at Kadesh

in the wilderness of Zin till they shall awaken her with the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, and she answering them with a timbrel, Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy.

XXI

MOSES

NOW THE MAN MOSES WAS VERY MEEK, ABOVE ALL THE MEN THAT WERE UPON THE FACE OF THE EARTH

ERE I to let myself once expatiate on the whole of Moses' life I would not know where to begin or where to end. But my method and my endeavour in these expositions is the study of those Bible men and women in their moral character alone. My intention and my aim is to try to find out how the foundations of their moral character were laid in those Bible men and women; how their respective lives and characters were built up, what the instruments were, and what the occasions and opportunities by means of which those men and women made themselves what they were and are; as, also, to search out and ponder the wonderful ways in which God worked in and around those men and women to make them His workmanship also, created under His hand unto good works. And my present text is the very best text in all the Five Books of Moses for this purpose in the case of Moses himself. For the text is the cope-

stone and the crown and the perfect finish of Moses' moral character and spiritual life. And our chief interest in all that Moses came through from the beginning to the end of his wonderful history is just to find out how it all contributed to and told upon his incomparable meekness and humility; that is to say, upon the perfection and the finish of his matchless moral character.

By all accounts Moses did not begin by being a meek man. The truth is, no truly meek man ever does so begin. It is not true meekness if it is found in any man at the beginning of his life. It may be sloth, it may be softness, it may be easiness, it may be indifference, it may be policy and calculation, it may be insensibility of heart, it may be sluggishness of blood, but true meekness it is not. True meekness it is not till it has been planted, and watered, and pruned, and purified, and beaten upon by every wind of God, and cut to pieces by every knife of God, and all the time engrafted and seated deep in the meekness and in the gentleness and in the humility of the Spirit of God and the Son of God. It would be far nearer the truth to say that Moses, to begin with, was the hastiest and the hottest and the least meek and the least longsuffering of men. It was but a word and a blow with young Moses. And it was a word and a blow that laid you on the spot in your grave in the sand. No; the meekness of Moses was not a case of complexion, nor a matter of temperament, any more than it was the grace of a new beginner in godliness and virtue. Moses would by that time be well on to threescore and

ten of our years, as we count our years, before it was written of him what stands written of him in our noble text.

I for one will all but exonerate and absolve that grave in the sand. The Egyptian slave-driver, as I take it, deserved all that he got. But if you still protest in your distance and security and indifference against the lynch-law of Moses, then you have Augustine on your side to support you. 'I affirm,' says that great father, 'that the man, though criminal, and really the offender, ought not to have been put to death by one who had no legal authority to do so. But minds that are capable of virtues often produce vices also.' Yes: and as I read this ancient narrative, and look human nature in the face, unless that young Hebrew had had this vice in his blood that day, he would never have had the virtue in after days that made him Moses. Unless he had had it in him, vice or virtue, to strike that bold blow at that insolent Egyptian, he would never have had it in him to strike off Israel's fetters. If he had hesitated and calculated and looked this way and that way that day, we would not have had his perfected meekness before us for our text to-night. I like to think of the son of Pharaoh's daughter out for a drive toward the land of Goshen that tempting sunset. I like to see the old nursling of God-her-glory still showing to all men what he had been suckled on. I rejoice to see that all the learning, and all the art, and all the luxury, and all the licentiousness, and all the dazzling prospects of Egypt have not emasculated Moses, nor made him

ashamed of his oppressed kinsmen. You and I would have taken up discretional ground. We would have said that it would be eminently unwise to meddle between a master and his servant. We would have said that we had not time to go into the case. We would have told Pharaoh's second charioteer to drive on. We would have gained Augustine's approval. We would have been law-abiding Britons that day. Unfortunately for Moses, it was not our calm Christian blood that was running in his veins that day; and thus it was that he had to pay with forty years' banishment for his sudden spring upon that Egyptian taskmaster, and for the life-long thanks of that delivered slave.

John Cairns refusing at forty to be called the Principal of Edinburgh University, and choosing rather to be the pastor of a despised dissenting congregation of his evangelical fellow-countrymen than to be a philosopher of European reputation, is the nearest thing I know to Moses at forty. Cairns and Keble. Having carried off as a mere boy the highest honours of the University, says Newman in his *Apologia*, Keble turned from the admiration which haunted his steps, and sought for a better and a holier satisfaction in pastoral work in the country. This, also, which is continually happening in Scotland, is not unlike the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The son of a shepherd, or of a stone-breaker, will take a bursary at school. He will thus get his foot on the lowest spar of the ladder. He has talents, and industry, and character, and religion. He takes his degree with classical or philosophical

or mathematical honours at Glasgow or Aberdeen. His scholarship carries him up to Oxford or Cambridge. He becomes learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; as Philo has it, 'making himself master of all their disputes without encouraging any disputatious disposition in himself.' The news soon comes that he has taken the highest honours. The University takes him up and nourishes him for her own son. His way is open. There is nothing to which he may not aspire. The Scottish crofter's son may yet wear an English mitre. But, like Moses, it comes into his heart to visit his brethren in Argyll or Inverness, till he esteems a Gaelic congregation in his father's church and in his father's land a greater honour to him than all the honour and glory of England, as seeing Him who is invisible. Ouranius is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the Gospel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor country village. When Ouranius was still a young man he had an ambition in his heart, a haughtiness in his temper, and a great contempt and disregard of all foolish and unreasonable people. But he has prayed away that spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners. The rudeness, ill-nature, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock used at first to betray him into impatience, but now it raises no other passion in him than a desire of being upon his knees in prayer to God for them. Thus have his prayers for others altered and amended the whole state of his own heart. This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes everything that

comes to him instructive, amiable, and affecting. He now thinks the poorest creatures in his parish good enough and great enough to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices he can possibly show them. He is so far from wanting great or learned or courtly people that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world than to be talking to mean and poor people about the Kingdom of Heaven. All this makes Ouranius more and more careful of every temper of his heart according to the strictest rules of temperance, meekness, and humility, that he may in some degree be like Abraham and Moses and Job in his parish ministry.

Some of you will know what forty years in the wilderness, and at the back of the Mount of God, have done for yourselves. You know how those years have reduced and subdued your too-high temper, and weaned you off from the shams and the sweetnesses of this world, and given you some eyes and some heart to suffer the loss of all things for the recompense of your reward in heaven,—in heaven, where the least and the lowest reward is greater riches than all the gain and all the glory of the present world. And if forty years have wrought such a change in such a slow-hearted scholar of God as you are, you will not wonder at the man Moses as he came back from the land of Midian. Any use you are, or are ever likely to be, or have now any hope or any ambition to be—it all has its roots in the great grace of God to you, and in any little humility and meekness that has come out

of all that to you. And when you multiply all that, and yourself as the result of all that, by ten thousand, then you will have Moses in Midian, the herdman and the son-in-law of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Forgotten John Foster has a fine lecture on Jethro and Moses, in which that great preacher's philosophical and imaginative and spiritual power all come out. And all John Foster's power is needed to construct and to let us see Moses' life in Jethro's household, and out among his sheep, for those forty exiled years. Moses' magnificent powers of mind: his possession with him in his exile of all the learning and religion of Egypt; all Egypt's power and glory and cruelty and pollution, were before Moses as he wandered and pondered over Horeb; the past of his own people, and their future; his own wonderful youth and early manhood; that taskmaster's blood still upon his hands, and God coming nearer and nearer, and becoming clearer and clearer, more awful, but at the same time more good and more gracious every day,—forty years of that to such a man as Moses already was, that was God's way He took to make Moses the meekest man and the greatest prophet till Christ came. Nothing so occupies a man like Moses as solitude. Nothing so humbles a man like Moses as great gifts and great providences. And nothing so meekens a man like Moses as the sins of his youth; added to the corruption and the dregs of corruption that he still sees and feels in his own heart. And all that, and far more than we are told, or can ourselves divine—all that

went from forty years and onwards to make Moses the meekest of men and the most prepared for his magnificent work.

There is another thing that God sometimes overrules and employs to break and humble and make more and more meek the hearts of His best servants, and that is family misunderstandings, family disputes, and family quarrels, and, especially, misunderstandings and disputes and explosions between husband and wife. And there are three most obscure and most mysterious verses in Moses' history that mean, if they mean anything at all to us, just such an explosion of ill-temper as must have left its mark till death on the heart of Moses and Zipporah. The best of wives; his help meet given him of God; the most self-effacing of women; the wife who holds her husband in her heart as the wisest and the best of men,—under sufficient trial and provocation and exasperation, even she will turn and will strike with just one word; just once in her whole married lifetime, as in that wayside inn on the way to Egypt, and as in Henrik Ibsen's latest and ripest tragedy. She does it only once; but when she does it, she does it as only the wife of a good man can do it. Till Moses lies done to death between his two best friends, who have both united to kill him that terrible day in that terrible inn. Zipporah may, or may not forget that day, and forgive it; but Moses never forgot it. And though he covers up that wayside scene as much as he may, no husband and no wife ever read that covert, and to all other readers enigmatical passage, without their hearts

bleeding for Moses, and for Moses' wife, and for themselves. Moses' heart went to pieces that day between God and Zipporah, till he took his staff in his hand next morning, the solitariest, the meekest, and the most surrendered of men, and the most meet to be the best prophet of God and the best redeemer of Israel till the Man of all Sorrows came to leave Moses, and all his meekness and all his services to God and man, far behind.

It was on the occasion of the disgraceful attack of Miriam and Aaron on Moses at Hazeroth that this testimony was borne to Moses, that he was by that time the meekest man on the face of the earth. It was when Miriam and Aaron determined to pull down Moses from the supreme place that God had gifted him for and had put him into,—it was then that God set on Moses His open and His lasting seal to the greatness of Moses' office as a prophet, and the greatness of Moses' meekness as a man. 'That incident,' says Ewald, the great philosophical historian of Israel, 'furnishes a grand exemplification of the universal truth, that the best and the most capable man in a community is often the most misunderstood and the best persecuted.' And it was just this persecution that drew out the divine vindication and valuation that is here put of God upon Moses. Luther's translation of the Hebrew text is a fine stroke both of exegetical licence and of exegetical genius. Moses was very much plagued, Luther renders; he was plagued, indeed, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth. Yes; 'plagued' exactly describes the life that Moses had

led ever since he was called of God to take Israel in hand: and all Moses' plagues came to a head in the matter of Miriam and Aaron and their envy and evil-speaking. But just then, or not long after then, the copestone and the full finish was put on Moses' meekness. God is fast putting His last touch to His servant's meekness and humility of heart when He shows him what a terrible temptation his great gifts and his great services are to his brother and his sister. For a man like Moses to see how his high place as God's prophet to Israel, and, especially, his sovereign superiority to all other prophets, was a constant source of sin and misery to Miriam and Aaron, his own sister and brother, plunging them into such envy and ill-will,—what a last blow to all Moses' remaining pride and ambition and self-exalting was that! And when we have eyes and a heart to take it to heart ourselves, how our very best things also are made a continual occasion to our brother of his worst things—our good his evil, our lifting up his casting down, our health his sickness, our life his death—when we lay that aright to heart, then there will be more men than Moses who will be meek above all the men that are on the face of the earth.

The perseverance of the saints, says an excellent old adage, is made up of ever new beginnings. So it is. And Moses' perseverance in meekness was exactly of that ever-beginning kind. For Holy Scripture exhibits and exposes Moses as back again at the very beginning of his meekness when he is on the very borders of the promised land. Moses, with

humility and with fear let it be seen and said, was as hasty, and as hot, and as violent away on at the rock of Meribah as ever he was among the sands of Goshen. Moses struck the rock that late day with the very same stroke of angry passion with which he had killed the Egyptian in that early day. And all the rest of his days on earth, all the way from Meribah to Pisgah, Moses went mourning, praying, and importuning for his sin against meekness in his old age, as much and more than he had done from Goshen to Midian in the days of his youth. The perseverance of the saints is indeed made up of ever new beginnings. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And, again, a still meeker than Moses says to us every day, Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Moses, the patriot fierce, became
The meekest man on earth,
To show us how love's quick'ning flame
Can give our souls new birth.

Moses, the man of meekest heart,
Lost Canaan by self-will,
To show where grace has done its part,
How sin defiles us still.

Thou, who hast taught me in Thy fear
Yet seest me frail at best,
O grant me loss with Moses here,
To gain his future rest.

XXII

MOSES THE TYPE OF CHRIST

A PROPHET OF THY BRETHREN, LIKE UNTO ME

I WISH that Moses had either told me less or had told me more about his mother. It is very tantalising to be told her remarkable name and to be told no more. Was 'God-thy-glory' the remarkable name that Moses gave to his mother as often as he looked back at all that he owed to her, and as often as he rose up and called her blessed? Or was her very remarkable name her own invention? Was her striking name her own seal that she had set to her own vow which she made to her own God after some great grace and goodness of her own God? Or, again, did the angel of the Lord visit that daughter of the house of Levi on some Jabbok-like or Annunciation-night, and so name her as the sun rose upon her prayer? I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, wrote Paul to young Timothy, and which faith dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice. And I call to remembrance also how God-her-glory dwelt in her husband's hut

among the brick-fields of Egypt, and was nothing daunted, or dazzled, or seduced by all the state, and wealth, and power, and pollution of Egypt. She stayed her great heart on the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, till she saw in her sleep a bush burning but not consumed, and till she, too, sang her own Magnificat. And then, one after another, she bore and suckled three such children as Miriam, and Aaron, and then the son of Pharaoh's daughter—bore and suckled all three on the same strong milk, till she weaned them from milk and put them on the marrow of lions. The oak has its roots round the rock, and men like Moses have their roots round their mother.

Neither do we know much about the mother of that Prophet like unto Moses. All that we know about the Virgin Mary might have been excellently gathered up of the angel into the remarkable name of Moses' mother. Mary said as much herself when she was with Elizabeth in the hill-country. My soul doth magnify the Lord, she said, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. How both those young mothers nursed their sons for God, and how they are now getting their wages from God, as they look upon their sons in their glory together, every mother among us must think continually. And no mother can think of Moses' mother, and of the mother of that Prophet like unto Moses, without asking of God, night and day, that their sons also may all in their measure be like Moses, and like that Prophet like unto Moses. And He went down, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them;

but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. In the old Hebrew, says Albert Bengel, the whole is ascribed to the mother.

Glancing at the Alexandrians among his accusers, Stephen, the witnessing deacon, said to them that Pharaoh's daughter took Moses up and nourished him for her son. And Moses, he added, was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. Now, the very opposite upbringing was appointed to our Lord. For his detractors never ceased to cast it up to Him that He had never learned letters like Moses: which was quite true. But the fact was, the letters of that day had nothing really to teach the child Jesus, else He would have diligently learned them. He did learn them as far as they were worthy to be called letters, and to be learned. You may be sure there were no children in all Israel at that day whose fathers and mothers taught them more diligently both when they sat in the house, and when they walked in the way, and when they lay down, and when they rose up, than Joseph and Mary taught both the letter and the spirit of Moses to Jesus and to His brothers and to His sisters. And then, as He grew up He had nature to observe and to study and to learn, and man, and, best of all,

Himself. He had the carpenter's shop, and the carpenters, — an excellent school for a future preacher; and He had the sky and the sea and the mountains. The foxes in their holes, the birds in their nests, the lilies of the field outstripping Solomon in all his glory, the hen and her chickens, the mustard seed in Joseph's garden, the wheat seed in the fields around, and spring-time, and summer, and harvest, and winter—that He was at school of His Father in all that, every sermon of His in after years is the abundant proof. But, best of all, He had HIMSELF. If 'Know thyself' was ever said with any fitness to any man, it was surely said with supreme fitness to the Man Christ Jesus. For He was the Mystery of Godliness Itself. He was God manifest to Himself first in the flesh. He was The Word of God. In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. Now, all our young preachers are to be as like Moses as they possibly can, and as like their Divine Master as they possibly can. They are all to be classical scholars, like Moses, if we can help it. But, above all, they are to be Christian men. Pascal went to hear a great preacher in Paris, and found a man in the pulpit. And that made all the difference to a man like Pascal. And we want to rear up true and genuine men for all our pulpits, men who shall set themselves resolutely to all learning, but who shall on that account be all the more men, and all the better men. It is not what the preacher has learned in the schools—it is not the preacher's literature—that impresses Pascal; it is the preacher himself. And

what our examiners are bent upon is not conic sections, or even Chaldee, in our candidates for the ministry; it is habits of work, and discipline of mind, and seriousness of purpose, and the ability, and the determination, and the perseverance to go on to old age, bringing out every Sabbath day to their people things new and old. Paracelsus denounced those doctors of medicine and those ministers of religion in his day who roasted pears all day.

Very much what the burning bush was to Moses —that His baptism at the Jordan must have been to our Lord. He that dwelt in the bush called Moses to the work of his life that eventful day on Horeb; and, so far as we can gather, our Lord received and accepted His full and final call also at the Jordan. So far as we can see, our Lord had the great seal of His Messiahship set upon His heart that day. And with that there came that unparalleled outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Ghost which made Him without measure equal to all His high call. Never did mortal man set out to such a task as that which was set to Moses at the bush. But what a far greater call was that which came to our Lord at Bethabara for our salvation! Look into your own heart and you will see there what Jesus Christ was called, and baptized, and anointed, and sworn in that day to do. You will never wonder and stand amazed and aghast at His awful task by studying it in any book—not even in the New Testament. But you will so stand, and so fall down, every day and all your days, if you only

begin to study all the call and all the offices of Christ in yourself. As He so studied His call; as He saw more and more what was in the heart of man, and what came out of the heart of man, He sometimes seemed inclined to repent of and to resign His awful call, and to despair of His terrible office. And you will not wonder at that; you will expect that, when you look into yourself as He looks into you. But He went through with His call. He did not throw it up. He finished it. And He is finishing it still to-night in you and in me. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

And Moses was in the mount with God forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him. On reading that we instinctively pass on and remember this. And He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. There are some things there that go far down beyond our utmost depth. At the

same time, there are some things there that speak very plainly to us, and speak no parable. Did you ever happen to pass a looking-glass as you rose off your knees after an unusually long or unusually close season alone with God? Then you must have been startled and delighted to see that your plain, dull, old, haggard face was for the moment positively youthful and beautiful. Well, that was a ray or two of the identical same light that shone through Moses' skin of his face, and through our Lord's very raiment. Another thing. Moses neither ate bread nor drank water on the mount. And every meal you miss when you are in the Mount with God gives a new fineness, transparence, translucence, and fore-glow of glory to the skin of your face also. Then, again, you must often have seen two young lovers just parting, and as one of them passed you, you turned and looked after him for his face so shone out upon you. It was the light of heaven that filled his heart coming out at his face. All our lovers are so transfigured when they are still young. And it is only when they become old and cease to love that they become gross, and sodden, and stupid, and full of earth in their faces, and void of heaven. In paradise, Dante tells us, the more they love the more they shine. In heaven you will recognise and discover the great lovers of God and of man by the greater splendour and by the more exquisite beauty of their faces, and of their raiment, and even of the very street of gold they walk upon. What Moses said to Jesus on the New Testament mount about his ancient exodus from Egypt, and

about the far greater exodus which should so soon be accomplished at Jerusalem—what would we not have given had Peter, James, and John but told us! But Peter was asleep as usual; and thus it is that we are left without a conversation we would have given—what would we not have given?—to have overheard.

Another thing in which Moses was a type of Christ was in the way he was envied and hated and detracted; and that, too, of his brother and sister, and of those he was serving with all his might, in season and out of season. For this is the diabolical distinction and supremacy of envy, that it boils up not in the hearts of enemies but of friends; in the secret hearts of brothers and sisters and bosom friends. The Athenians put it on Plato's tomb-stone—'Here lies a man much too great for envy.' Well, Moses was a much greater prophet than Plato, and yet he was not too great to Miriam and Aaron for envy. And Jesus Christ was a far greater prophet than Moses and Plato put together, and yet Pilate saw it in their evil faces, and heard it in their evil voices, that it was for envy His own had delivered Him. Some of you will be thankful from the bottom of your heart that you read so much about such envy in the Bible. It makes you feel somewhat less lonely. But all that does not satisfy you. You sometimes wish that such envy had been far more in the Bible than it is. In your absolute agony, in your absolute madness, in your absolute despair, you will sometimes have the blasphemous wish that another Bible Character than either Aaron

or Miriam or the elders of Israel—that He, with all His humiliation, and with all His agony, and with all His abandonment and darkness, had just had one of your days and nights of such envy. You feel as if you could then have had more hope in drawing near Him and of opening up your hell to His heart.

Another thing in which Moses and Christ are type and anti-type to one another is their consummate meekness under all envy and all detraction and all other ill-usage. It is a translation that is also an exposition and an illustration when Luther renders the Hebrew for meekness into the German for plagued; plagued and trampled on. For never were two servants of God so plagued, and so trampled on, and so ill-used in every way as Moses and Christ; and hence their never-equalled meekness. The divine use of envy, and detraction, and insolence, and ingratitude, like all that through which first Moses and then Christ were passed, was to give meekness her perfect work in them both. And as they were, so are we in this world. All that cruelty, and injustice, and impudence, and insolence, and unthankfulness that fill some men's and some ministers' lives so full—it is all because God has it in His plan for them to make them meek like Moses and meek like Christ. Learn of Me, our Saviour says to all such men, and ye shall have My peace of mind, and My inward rest and repose in yourselves also. Aaron and Miriam and all the people of Israel were to Moses what Jeremy Taylor calls 'the instruments of his virtue' And

so were all the bad men around our Lord. And so are all such men that are ordained and permitted to be round about us. May we all make as good a use of our instruments of virtue as Moses and Jesus made of theirs!

Those forty years of Moses in the land of Midian were great and fruitful years for Israel and for us. But those thirty-three years of Jesus Christ in Galilee and Jewry were far away and out of sight the greatest and the most fruitful years this world has ever seen, or ever again will see. All eternity itself—past, present, and to come—holds no such years for us as those thirty-three years of Jesus Christ. For during those thirty-three years God became man. God entered into man, and man entered into God, till God and man became for ever One. All through those supreme years the soul and the body of the Man Christ Jesus were being built up into an everlasting temple of God. All down those splendid years the soul and the body, the mind and the heart of Jesus Christ were being refined and transfigured, and made transparent and transpicuous, till he who saw and handled the Man Christ Jesus saw and handled The Very Word of Life. He in those happy days who saw and handled the Man Christ Jesus saw and handled Almighty God Himself. Hence at His baptism, His Father said: This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And, again, at His transfiguration—Hear ye Him. And thus it was that henceforth and as often as He opened His mouth and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you—all the ancient oracles fell dumb, Urim

and Thummim themselves ceased to shine and seal, and Moses answered again and said, Send, O Lord, by the hand of Him whom Thou wilt send. As Peter, now for ever awakened out of sleep, had it in his great address—Moses said truly to the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. For unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

And, to crown all, and to come to his nearest and his best to Christ, Moses in Israel's terrible extremity fell down before God and said, Blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written, if Thou wilt not otherwise forgive Israel their sins. And, both for their sin and for his own sin, God took Moses at his word, and for a season and to some extent He did blot Moses out of the book which He had written. What a sad end was Moses' end, after such a great and such a noble life! And what a sad end was that of a far greater than Moses after a far greater and a far nobler life! And it was sin that did it to them both: actual sin to Moses, and imputed sin to Christ. But what is sin, do you ask? Well, sin passeth, like salvation, all understanding. Only look for yourselves at Moses shut out of Canaan, and look for yourselves at Christ shut up to Gethsemane and to Calvary, and you will see something of what sin deserves. And then stop and consider what you owe to Him who blotted Himself out of God's book

for you and for all your sins. Let this cup pass from Me. But if not, then blot Me out of Thy book. Receive, O sinner, on the spot where thou sittest, receive and ever after keep fast hold of Him and of His salvation.

XXIII

PHARAOH

A NEW KING WHO KNEW NOT JOSEPH.... AND WHEN HE SAW THAT THERE WAS RESPITE HE HARDENED HIS HEART

WHEN King Ahasuerus could not sleep at night he used to have his chamberlains called in to read the books of the chronicles of the kingdom at his bedside. And as the reading went on King Ahasuerus would stop them and would ask them, What honour and what reward have been done to Mordecai for all this? And then when the king's ministers answered him that nothing had been done, the first orders that the king gave in the morning were that Mordecai and all his descendants should be set straightway among the men whom the king delighted to honour. Now it was just because Pharaoh the father did not have the history of Egypt read to him in that way that he and his son came to such a terrible end. Poor, misguided crown-prince, when he was still the crown-prince! His tutors and his governors had destroyed their royal charge for lack of knowledge. They had amused him, and flattered him, and let him run

wild, and let him have his own way in everything, when they should have been bringing him up as David brought up Solomon, and as the wise men in the east brought up Cyrus. The only claim any man has to reign over other men is that he is wiser and better than they are. The divine right, as it used to be called, of every true king is grounded in his wisdom, and in his goodness, and in his truth, and in his justice; he is the best born, the best brought up, the best read, the best experienced, the largest-minded and the noblest-hearted man in all the land. But the times are changed since Pharaoh's day. We are all kings, in a manner, in our day. We all have a crown on our head, and a sword and a sceptre in our hand. And, in our measure, we should all be instructed statesmen, like the royal patron of Mordecai and Esther; and it will go ill with us, and with those who come after us, if we are like Pharaoh, who had never heard of Joseph, and what Joseph had done for the land of Egypt. That will be the best election-time Scotland has ever seen, not when this or that party comes into power, but when every enfranchised man has already read about Wallace and Bruce, and about Cromwell and Milton, and about Hampden and Pym, and about Knox and Melville, and about Henderson and Rutherford and Chalmers. When all who have votes prepare themselves for the polling-booth in that way, then we shall see a House of Commons composed of the best and ablest men the land can produce; the most loyal, the most fair and just,

the most God-fearing, and the least self-seeking of men. Then Ireland, and India, and China, and Africa, and Armenia, and Macedonia shall hold out their hands to England; and all lands shall both love and fear England and her Queen because of that knowledge and that righteousness which alone exalteth a nation, and which alone enthroneth and establisheth a sovereign.

Come on, let us deal wisely with them, said the ill-read and ignorant sovereign who sat on the throne of Egypt at the time when the children of Israel were fast becoming more and mightier than their masters. Come on, was his insane edict, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they join themselves to our enemies and fight against us. Therefore, they did set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. But the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew. Till in a policy of despair this demented king charged all his people, saying, Every son of the Hebrews that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. This is all that remains on the statute-book of Egypt to testify to the statesmanship of that king of Egypt who had never heard of Joseph the son of Jacob, the servant of Potiphar, and the counsellor and deliverer of the kingdom. That was the statute-book, and that was the sword and the sceptre, that this Pharaoh handed down to his son who succeeded him, and who was that new Pharaoh whom God raised up to show in him His power,

and that through him His name might be declared throughout all the earth. A Pharaoh, says Philo, whose whole soul from his cradle had been filled full of the arrogance of his ancestors. And indeed, he was no sooner sat down on his throne, we no sooner begin to hear his royal voice, than he at once exhibits all the ignorance and all the arrogance of his ancestors in the answer he gives to Moses and Aaron: Who is the Lord that I should obey Him? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. Get you to your burdens. It is because you are idle that you say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go, therefore, for there shall no straw be given you, and yet you shall deliver your tale of bricks! The father had not known Joseph, and the son knew neither Joseph, nor Moses, nor Aaron, nor God. Moses! Moses is my slave, he shouted. Moses should be baking his tale of bricks all this time. What! Moses! of all men in the world, to come into my presence with a demand like that! Had Moses been some great ambassador who had come in a ship from some far country; had Moses and Aaron come with great gifts and in a great name to negotiate a royal league with Egypt, Pharaoh would have done them honour. A banquet would have been spread for Moses and Aaron, and the great council of the kingdom would have been called together to receive them, and to hear what they had to say. But Moses and Aaron! Why, they should have been at their tasks! Who are they, to come like ambassadors to me? No; to your bricks and to your

burdens, you Moses and Aaron! And if only your minister were some great one, it would go so much better with him and with you. If he only came from some far-off city, and from some famous pulpit. If you only heard him preach once or twice in a lifetime, then you would attend to what he says; and you might, who knows, be prevailed on to do it. If your minister were only Dr. Chalmers, or Dr. Candlish, or Mr. Spurgeon. But he is nobody. And, besides, he has offended you, and has not always pleased you. And he is full of faults. And, besides, you know all about him. Moses had blood upon his hands in his youth, as Pharaoh's counsellors kept him well in mind. Yes, you stick to it like that royal spirit. It would be weak, it would be an impossible humiliation in you, to make any alteration in your heart or in your life for what your present minister says. Talk on after every sermon. Show your children after every sermon and every prayer of his how much better their father could preach and pray. Tell them about Disruption times. Laugh at their weak impressions and at their foolish praises, and tell them that they have never heard preaching to be called preaching. And if it turns out with you like Pharaoh, and if Pharaoh rises up in the day of judgment to condemn you, then stand up on the left hand and tell the Judge to His face that He never gave you and your children a chance. With such a minister, you never had fair play and a proper chance. Moses! Who, I would like to know, is Moses? Pharaoh was still shouting out

that to his captains when the Red Sea rolled in and cut short his scorn.

What sign showest Thou, said the unbelieving Jews to our Lord, that we may see, and believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Let me see a miracle, said Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron, and then I will let Israel go. And to satisfy Pharaoh, and to soften his heart, Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. But instead of saying, This is the Lord, and proclaiming an edict that the people should go free, Pharaoh called in his sorcerers and his magicians, and they did in like manner with their enchantments. And miracle succeeded miracle; miracles of judgment were wrought and miracles of mercy; but they all ended in the same way—Pharaoh's heart was only the more hardened. It looked a very innocent request. We would have said that it was a very promising and a very hopeful state of mind in Pharaoh to ask for some proof of the divine embassy of Moses and Aaron, and then he would obey. But, all the time, the evil seed of all Pharaoh's after life and death of sin lay at the heart of that innocent-looking, hopeful-sounding demand. For, innocent as it looked, and hopeful as it sounded, Pharaoh's demand put upon God, and upon Moses and Aaron, the first step of Pharaoh's repentance and obedience. If no miracle had followed his request, then Pharaoh would have felt fully justified in holding to his refusal. And, as it was, when his magicians did something sufficiently like Aaron's rod, then Pharaoh

fell back and took his stand upon that, till the miracle upon which he had suspended his obedience was wrought in vain. No. Pharaoh's first step to his salvation, had he but taken it, was not to see a miracle, but to do what he knew to be right. Had Pharaoh said to his servants—Come, let us read in the book of the kingdom. Come, let us see what manner of life the people of Israel live in Goshen. What are their sorrows? What are their complaints? What are their requests? Then he would have soon after said, Yes, let them sacrifice to their God without molestation; and then let them come back again to their work. That was all that was asked of Pharaoh for the time; and, had he not been filled full from his cradle with the ignorance and arrogance of his ancestors, Moses and he would soon have come to terms, and Egypt and Israel would have been friends and allies to this day. But Pharaoh took a wrong turn and a false step when he still asked for evidence where he should have offered obedience; and that wrong turn and that false step laid him at last in the bottom of the Red Sea.

No. It is not more evidence you need. Or, if it is evidence, then it is the evidence of obedience and experience. It is not a course of Lectures on Apologetics you need. All the Bridgewater and Bampton treatises together would only mislead you and harden your heart. Neither is it a special providence, nor an extraordinary interposition on the part of Almighty God that you need. No. Be not self-deceived. For this cause, among others, God raised

up Pharaoh that he might speak to you out of the Red Sea, saying, Learn of me. Burn your books about miracles. If I had not bargained for miracles I would not have been here. Read books of obedience. Read books of prayer and repentance and obedience. Cease from debate and betake yourselves to be alone with God. Yes. A voice comes from the depth below, as well as from the height above, saying to us all, He among you that doeth the will of God, even he shall know of the doctrine, and shall not need to seek after a miracle. Do the will of God in the thing that lies nearest you, and in the thing that God has been so long asking of you; do it; resolve to do it; begin to do it to-night and before to-morrow; and then all past miracles in Egypt and in Israel, and all present providences and all coming experiences, will all work together to soften your heart and thus to strengthen and assure your faith. But turn away to-night from your first duty; make postponements; seek more convenient seasons; raise obstacles; make conditions; seek for signs, and put it off yourself, and put it upon God and upon His servants, to wait for you and to make terms with you, and from this night your heart will harden like Pharaoh's heart till your end is like his. Two young men are sitting in one seat, and, to look at them, you would say that they are not far from the kingdom of God. Their hearts are in the balance. They are almost persuaded. The intimation is made to them of the approaching celebration of the Lord's Supper. The time and the place are

told them when their names may be entered for the Table. They both listen to the intimation. They both think about it; both in their own way. Yes, the one says, I have put it off too long. And I am no better. I think I will take what looks like God's word to me to-night. I will offer myself just as I am. And he does it. And his name is enrolled for the coming communion. He begins to-night and he goes on from to-night. The church is henceforth his church. The minister is henceforth his minister. He comes up to the church Sabbath after Sabbath now with a new interest in everything, and a stake of his own in everything. His heart softens and softens. And his faith clears up, and strengthens, and strikes root, and brings forth fruit; till, after years and years and years spent among us, he passes over into the promised land. His neighbour looks at the communion invitation also, and almost accepts it. No. I will wait, he says. I have some difficulties not yet resolved. I have not seen the unbelieving argument of that new book sufficiently answered. I must first read what is to be said on the other side. No, not to-night. No, not this communion yet. And he goes home. And, you could not detect it, it is so little, but his heart is just the smallest degree hardened to-night. He was at the sharp turning of the way, and he took, if anything, the wrong turn. He took Pharaoh's turn. May he turn again! Turn him, O Lord, before he goes on to Pharaoh's end.

The magicians led on Pharaoh so far, but a time

came when their enchantments could carry them no farther. This is the finger of God, the outdone magicians had the insight and the honesty to say. This is the finger of God, and there is no use, and it would be death to us, to go on fighting with our enchantments against God's finger any further. Do, they advised Pharaoh—do what is asked of thee, and let the people go. But those magicians had done their evil work better than they knew. For, by that time, Pharaoh's heart was so hardened by their enchantments that he would not hearken to the too late advice of his old enchanters. Just so. We have seen it ourselves a thousand times. We have seen magicians who could begin a work of deception and delusion, but who could not stop the deception and undo the delusion when they fain would. We have seen philosophers putting nature in the place of God till their scholars went against both God and nature too. We have seen fathers and mothers indulging their sons, and letting them take their own way in religion and in life till they could not stop them. We have seen infidels, and scoffers, and gamblers, and drunkards, and all manner of profligates made by the score, as the magicians made Pharaoh; made, that is, little by little, till the work was finished, and till those who began it and carried it so far on were laughed at when they said, This, I fear, is the finger of God. The very sorcerers themselves at last believed, but Pharaoh still held out. They could set a bad work a-going; but, with all their advice, and with all their authority, they could not stop their evil work, nor in one iota undo it.

But stroke after stroke, plague after plague, fell upon Pharaoh till even he was brought at last to his knees. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord and I will let the people go. And Moses cried unto the Lord, and the Lord did according to the word of Moses. But when Pharaoh saw that there was to be respite, he hardened his heart and hearkened not unto them. Fatal Pharaoh! Everything that came to Pharaoh hardened his hard heart. God was fairly baffled with Pharaoh. God was completely defeated by Pharaoh. Good and evil, grace and judgment, plague and respite from plague—it was all one. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Pharaoh was his name. What is your name? Well, when we substitute your name for Pharaoh's name in the terrible passage about the respite, we have in that passage the last chapter, the latest written-out chapter, of your evil life. Your present respite is fast running out, and up to this holy day you are still hardening your heart. You have gone on doing the things you swore to God and to man you would never do again. Because judgment against your evil work was not executed out, when it began to be executed, you have lifted up your heel to this very day in the face of God. There are men here to-night who were in that same seat on the New Year's day before last. And they have often remembered, sometimes with tears, but more often with a hard remorse as of hell, the text of that New Year's day address. The text that day was out of À Kempis, and it was to this effect. That spiritual writer said

to us that, if we would root out but one of our vices every new year, we should soon become perfect men. And, as I know, there were some men present here that New Year's day who were so touched and so taken with that striking counsel of À Kempis that they asked for a respite for that year. Now, that is a year and a half ago. They have had a whole half-year to the bargain, till their vice is all the deeper in their bodies and in their souls to this day. Stop to-night before you sleep. Stay up alone and set yourself to think what conceivable end God can have had in raising you up, and in filling your life so full of so many accumulated and aggravated sentences and respites of sentences? God tells us Himself for what purpose He raised up Pharaoh. And, read what God says about His purpose with Pharaoh in what light you like, and offer what explanations of it you like, still it remains a terrible story and a terrible sentence. What do you think, what do you suppose, God has raised you up for? Are you, do you think, would you believe, being sentenced and respited, sentenced and respited, and sentenced and respited again in order to show how far grace can go—your sin and God's grace? Who can tell, but that as Pharaoh stands to the end of time the proof of God's power, so you are to stand at the opposite pole as the proof of His long-suffering and superabounding grace? Yes, that must be it in you. After so many respites, and so much sin after so many respites, if you die under respite, that must be it. Yes, this must be the key to your so often

respited life—this: that, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And that, as sin hath reigned unto death in you, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life in you by Jesus Christ your Lord. May it be so!

XXIV

BALAAM

THE ERROR OF BALAAM

I SHALL take it for granted that you all have the Balaam chapters in the Book of Numbers by heart. You certainly ought to have those chapters by heart; for, taken together, they make up a narrative which Ewald pronounces to be unparalleled in effectiveness and unsurpassable in artistic finish. I shall assume, then, that you all have that artistic and effective narrative by heart, and I shall enter at once on some of the lessons I have been enabled to gather out of Balaam's awful history.

In the first place, then, that True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world kindled up in Balaam to an extraordinary brilliance and beauty. Balaam stands out in the selectest rank of those patriarchs and princes, those prophets and priests, who were raised up outside of the house of Israel in order that men might nowhere be left to live without a divine witness. To keep to the Old Testament—Melchizedek, and Jethro, and Balaam, and Job were all such divine witnesses to the pro-

fane lands in which they lived. Balaam, then, in his place, and to begin with, was a true and a greatly gifted prophet of Almighty God. Just listen to some passages out of Balaam's prayers and prophecies and exhortations, and judge for yourselves whether he was a man of divine gifts or no. 'And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. And he took up his parable and said, Balak hath brought me out of Aram, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel. But how shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom God hath not defied? Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' And, again, on the top of Pisgah, he takes up his parable in a way not unworthy of the place of Moses' grave: 'God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or, hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!' And on the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon, Balaam positively saw the day of Christ Himself afar off. 'I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him,

but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and out of Jacob shall come He that shall have the dominion.' And, to crown all. When Balak consulted Balaam, 'Wherewith shall I come unto the Lord, and bow down myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased,' inquired Balak, 'with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' 'He,' answered Balaam—'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' Could Moses, could Isaiah, could Paul himself have answered Balak better? No. The Great Prophet Himself never answered Balak better than that. Calvin is the prince of commentators, and Calvin has this on this passage: 'Certain it is that though Balaam was an impostor and full of deceits, yet he was endued with the gift of prophecy. This was the case, no doubt. God has often so distributed the gifts of His Spirit that He has honoured with the prophetic power even the ungodly and the unbelieving. The prophetic office was at that time a special gift, quite distinct from the grace of regeneration. Balaam, then, was a prophet.' A thing terrible to any man to think about; but terrible to a minister above all men to read, and to think, and to take home to his heart. For the gift of preaching, too, is a special and an official gift, alto-

gether distinct from the gift of a new heart or a holy life. A man may be an impostor, as Calvin says; he may be full of deceit, and yet may be an eloquent preacher. Moses, as we have seen, could not preach at all, as our fault-finding people would have said. And even Aaron, who was Moses' mouth, never came within sight of the sacred eloquence of Balaam. In fact, I have a remorseful feeling within myself that Balaam's pulpit eloquence, and the dust that his pulpit eloquence cast in his own and other men's eyes, largely helped him to his ruin. Some eloquent preachers put all their religion into their eloquence. Some impressive preachers put all their tears into their pulpit voice, and all their repentance and reformation into those powerful appeals they periodically make to their own and to other flocks. That burning passage in the Book of Numbers should be appointed to all divinity students to make an exegesis and a homily upon it before they receive licence. They should have to bring out and exhibit from Balaam, and from other instances in church history, how fine natural gifts, and great learning, and great eloquence in the pulpit may all lie like so much far-shining whitening on the surface of a sepulchre. One of their points should be that official excellence often consists in a preacher with much secret corruption, and that a minister may have a great name, and may make a great income, who has no name at all, and no reward at all with God. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils,

and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. What we ministers are in our closets, says John Owen, and not in our pulpits, just that we are in the scales of God: just that, and no more. Let us, then, who are ministers, or who are looking to be ministers, so live, lest, by any means, when we have preached to others, we ourselves should be cast away as reprobate Balaam was cast away.

Balaam's importunity in prayer: Balaam on his knees all night to know God's will, when he knew it all the time—a great deal of our own anxiety, and perplexity, and prayer, and importunity in prayer is made up out of the same self-deceit. 'I am afraid I cannot go; but tarry over the night till I see.' And Balaam actually went all night to God again about going to Balak. He was up a great while before day about going to Balak. Had God been a man, as Balaam in a fine sermon warned Balak He was not, then we would have said that Balaam was imposing upon God, and was laughing at Him behind His back. Had Balaam been a sincere and an honest man, he would have refused so much as to see Balak's second deputation of princes. He would have said to his servants that he was engaged and could not come down. He would have said to his servants to see that the princes of Moab and their companions and their camels had proper supper and lodging, as became a king's embassy; but that Balak had his last answer from him already. Had Balaam not been given over to making a great name for himself and a great fortune; had this

prophet been working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, instead of making beautiful pictures of salvation, and astonishing people with his eloquence on salvation, then Balaam would have put on strength when he saw that long string of camels on their way to his house. Now is my time! Balaam would have said to himself—Now is my accepted time! Now is the day of my salvation! A thorough honest man, as Butler says in his celebrated sermon on Balaam—a thorough honest man would have known how set upon the praises of men and the wages of unrighteousness his own heart was, and had all along been; and he would have acted that day accordingly. But Balaam, with all his talents and with all his opportunities, was a thorough dishonest man.

With all his fine sermons Balaam has his price, said Balak to himself when his first princes came back without Balaam. And Balak sent again princes, more, and more honourable than they. And with a profanity and an impudence that might well have made Balaam blush and become a new man, Balak said to Balaam, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming to me. Neither thy God nor anything else. For I will promote thee to very great honour, and I will do for thee whatsoever thou askest of me. Come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. The salmon is the king of fish; but, all the time, he is ridiculously easily taken. Ridiculously. Two or three inches of a sufficiently red rag drawn over a sufficiently sharp hook, and, with half an hour of a sufficiently strong and supple

wrist, the fool is in your basket. In that self-same, bare-faced, and rag-hooked way did Balak angle for Balaam, ay, and took him too. And in that self-same, bare-faced, and rag-hooked way are men and women being angled for and taken every day. A ribbon, a tassel, a shoulder-knot, a rosette, a garter, a feather, two or three empty letters before or after an equally empty name, and the fish is yours.

Yes, surely; go, if you would so much like to go, God said to Balaam as the day broke. At any rate, you may go so far. As you would have Me go against you, if you go all the way, take care what you say and do when you go. Beholding Balaam's insincerity, and being angry at it, says Philo, God said, By all means go. And Balaam's God is our God. And thus it is that as often as Balaam's insincerity, hesitation, sleepless anxiety about duty, prayer, and importunity in prayer are seen in us, He who gave way to Balaam gives way to us also, and says, Yes, surely. Our Maker does not place us under lock and key. He does not tie up our hands. He does not strike us lame or blind to make us obedient. He made us in His own image. He endowed us with free will. He did not intend us to be so many stocks and stones in His hands. Yes, certainly, He says; choose for yourself. What would you like best? Where is your treasure? Well, you are your own master. You are in this matter entirely in your own hands. There it stands in Holy Writ for all you who are in hesitation,—If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them.

But the angel of the Lord stood in a path in the vineyard, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord she thrust herself into the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. The dumb ass was doing her best to arrest and to save her eloquent master. And, had he not preached himself long past all hope of salvation, he would have divined the accident and interpreted the providence. Had he not been bereft of all sense and honesty, he would have turned his ass's head in that narrow lane, and would have carried his crushed foot home to rest it and to heal it, and to begin a new life after it. And ever after he would have caparisoned that ass with gold and silver, and would all but have made her his household god. And she would have deserved it all; for she did all she could do to save her devoted master, who had ridden her without a single swerve or stumble of hers to that day. But Balaam was too far gone for a bruised foot to bring him back. And, besides, the prevaricating angel practised upon the prophet, and perplexed the prophet's intellect and judgment, till he did not know what to do. We would never have taken that angel for an angel of the Lord had he not been so named of the sacred writer. For it is surely not usual with such angels at once to oppose a man and to push him on. I pity Balaam—what with his ass; what with that angel of the Lord; what with his crushed foot; and then with all his other bones out of joint, since his ass fell down under him. If it displease thee, said the so pious and so perplexed prophet to the two-

faced angel—if it displease thee for me to go on, then I will turn and get me back again. By no means, said the angel. By no means. Having come so far, you are not to lose all your travel and go back. No; go with the men. They are waiting till you mount. Come, and I will help you to your seat. And Balaam mounted his ass with the help of the angel and came to Balak. Have any of you a crushed foot to-night? I have. I can scarcely stand before you to finish for pain and for loss of blood. And, as the Lord liveth, all His angels, with all their irony and all their evil help, shall not sophisticate me out of my soul to-night. I, for one, am to turn to-night in the path between the vineyards. I shall not ask any angel, from heaven or from hell, whether it displeases him or no. I am determined to turn to-night. I have gone far too far already. I bless God for my crushed foot. Indeed I do. I know what I am saying, if you do not know. But, if you do, then come with me. Come, let us return to the Lord our God; for He hath torn, but He will heal us; He hath smitten, but He will bind us up. Only, Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

And then, look and learn how Balak, once he had got a hold of Balaam, cadged the prophet about from one hill-top to another to get the proper place from which to curse Israel. The first point of view to which Balak took Balaam was to one of the high places of Baal. But, when Balaam saw Israel shining in her tents below, his curses all stuck in his throat. He could not do it. Come, then, said

Balak, to a better place. I will take thee this time to a hill where thou shalt not see all their tents, and thou shalt curse them from thence. And Balak, not knowing what he was doing, brought Balaam to the top of Pisgah, till Moses' mantle fell on Balaam, and till Balaam was carried on in the Spirit to prophesy good things, and better things than ever, concerning Israel. Let us try the top of Peor this time, suggested Balak in his discomfiture. Build me then three altars there, said Balaam, and I will see what I can do. But, no. The sight of Israel lying below made the spirit of blessing to come upon Balaam again, till Balak smote his hands together, and in his anger dismissed Balaam to his home without his wages, since he had not done his work. Yes, truly, this narrative is unparalleled in its effectiveness. For, with what sure effect it discovers Balaam's seed to this day. Do you know Balaam's seed when you see them, or when you are yourself one of them? That is one of Balaam's seed in the ministry, that preacher who does his best to tune his pulpit to please the king. He cannot do it; but, as Davison says of Balaam, the will is not wanting. Do you remember how James Stuart dragged Robert Bruce about, seeking a place and a point of view from which that great preacher and great patriot might be got to preach and to pray to the king's dictation? If our young ministers would have a life-long lesson and illustration in fearlessness, in fidelity, and in a good conscience to the end of a life of bribes on the one hand, and of persecution and banishment on the other, let them read them-

selves deeply into those two narratives so unsurpassable in effectiveness for a minister, the Life of Balaam in the history of Israel, and the Life of Bruce in the history of Scotland and of England. That church member also who changes his minister in the interests of his business, he is of the offspring of Balaam. And that other who changes his minister for the peace of his conscience, he also is Balak and Balaam seeking a spot where they can get at their sin without that restraint. You can live a life of uttermost selfishness, and worldliness, and wicked tempers, and idleness, and vanity, and vice, and total and absolute neglect of prayer in one church, and under one minister, that you could not long live under another. We cannot shut our eyes to men and women choosing their hill-tops and building and kindling their altars all around us every day, exactly as Balak and Balaam chose their hill-tops and built and kindled their altars in their day. And some of you may be strongly tempted sometimes to try a change of church or a change of minister for liberty of action and for peace of mind. But you cannot do it. Like Balaam, you know too much, and you have seen too many of the tents of Israel. You may try to shut your eyes, and you may let Balak lead you about promising you your wages, but you shall never see the place where you can give your whole heart to evil, or where you can sin on without an inward rebuke.

But, Balaam,—ass, and angel, and crushed foot, and Almighty God Himself notwithstanding, he would have the wages of unrighteousness. He would

have Balak's gold. After his foot was whole again, —Balaam was a very clever man,—and he somehow got expectation and hope kindled again in Balak that Balaam might have changed his mind by this time. And, after some underground management, they met once again, Balak and Balaam, in the dark. You who know your Milton have there the identical advice that Balaam gave to Balak. It was the very same advice, to the letter, that Belial, the dissolutest spirit that fell, gave to the old serpent. Set women in their eye, counselled the old reprobate. And for his so late but so successful counsel Balaam got his house filled with Balak's silver and gold when Israel sinned and fell in the wilderness.

Let me die the death of the righteous! That was Balaam's noble peroration on the high place of Baal. But as we pass on from the Book of Numbers, with its unparalleled effectiveness, to the end of the history in the Book of Joshua, we find in that book this: Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them. And then, the apostle Jude, in denouncing certain evil men who had crept into the ministry and into the membership of the church of his day, says, Woe unto them! For they have run greedily after the error of Balaam. They are spots in your feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear; clouds they are without water; trees without fruit; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Such are some of the lessons of Balaam's lost life.

XXV

JOSHUA

JOSHUA, THE SON OF NUN, MOSES' SERVANT

WHERE were Gershom and Eliezer all this time? Were they both dead? Or, if living, had they no heart for their father's God till it had been better for them and for their father that they had never been born? Can it be possible that even Moses had come so far short as this, in the supreme duty and fast-passing opportunity of bringing up his own sons? Had her husband been so cumbered with the exodus, and with the law, and with all the cares and labours of the leadership in Israel, that he had no leisure so much as to eat his meals beside Zipporah and her two sons? Had Moses been far too long in accepting a staff of elders to assist him in ruling and judging Israel? And were Gershom and Eliezer grown up and gone clean out of hand before their father had wakened up to that and was aware of it? But, when all is said, it is far less the father than the mother in this matter. Had Moses' house, then, been so divided against itself that it fell upon his two sons? And

had Miriam and Aaron been right after all in their hot opposition to their brother's marriage with the Ethiopian woman? We ask these questions at the text, but we get no answer. We are left to look for the answers to all these questions in our own house, among our own sons and daughters, and in our own heart and conscience. At the same time, though Moses had wholly lost hold of his own sons, there is this to be said for the father of Gershom and Eliezer: that he had an immense attraction for some other men's sons. There was nothing more remarkable about Moses than the openness of his heart and the freshness of his mind to double the age of ordinary men; as Isaac Walton says, God had blessed Moses with perfect intellectuals and a cheerful heart to old age; and the young men who were always about him had had a great deal to do with that. You will sometimes see stranger young men crowding around a minister in his classes and in his congregational work, and saving their own souls by so doing, while those young men that have been born in the family are never so much as seen or heard of. And that was always the case with Moses. There was quite a circle of young men continually around Moses, and Joshua, the son of Nun, was the choicest and the most capable of them all. We know nothing as yet about Joshua—nothing but this, that he was not the son of Moses and Zipporah, but of a certain unknown man named Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua had no such start in life as Gershom and Eliezer had, but by his high character and his great services he not only took their

crowns from them, but at the same time he won a crown and sceptre and a great name in Israel all his own.

It is stated again and again in the sacred history that Joshua stood before Moses and was his minister. Stood ready, that is, to run the great man's errands, and to set out with him on his hallowed expeditions, and, in short, to be more than a son to Moses in the absence of his own sons. 'He departed not out of the tabernacle' is another very remarkable testimony for that time concerning the son of Nun. Now, in that Joshua was exactly like his Great Namesake in the New Testament whose wont it was to go up to the synagogue of Nazareth every Sabbath day, and who said to His father and mother when they sought Him all through Jerusalem sorrowing: 'How is it that ye seek Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' Joseph and Mary had sought the child Jesus in all those places where other sorrowing fathers and mothers were seeking their lost sons also,—among the theatres, and the circuses, and the shows, and the races, and the wrestling arenas, and the inns, and shops, and streets of Jerusalem; but He departed not out of the temple. We, too, have boys sometimes among ourselves not unlike that. They love and choose and are always to be found among good things, in good places, and reading good books while yet they are still mere children. They take to the Sabbath-school, and to the church, and to the Bible-class, and to the missionary meeting as other boys take, and no blame to them, to

cricket, and football, and fishing, and shooting. Wordsworth has two such boys:

> Never did worthier lads break English bread:
> The finest Sunday that the autumn saw,
> With all its mealy cluster of ripe nuts,
> Could never keep those boys away from church,
> Or tempt them to one hour of Sabbath breach,
> Leonard and James!

And as such boys rise to be young men they are already promising pillars in the house of their fathers' God. They are our Sabbath-school teachers, our elders and our deacons, our best preachers and pastors, and the heads of our seminaries and colleges. And Joshua, the son of Nun, was the first figure and far-off forerunner of all such young men as he stood before Moses, and was his minister, and went up with him to the mount, and never departed out of the tabernacle.

There is no finer grace to be found in any young man's heart than his admiration and reverence for great and good men. We really are already what we love and admire and honour. And when a young man has eyes to see and a heart to love and honour those good and gifted men he reads and hears about; or, still better, those who live near him, nothing could be a sounder sign or a surer promise of his own future character than that.

> We live by admiration, hope, and love;
> And even as these are well and wisely fixed,
> In dignity of being we ascend.

The mother of Gershom and Eliezer, from the very

little that we see of her, would seem to have been a froward, forward woman, and a rude and disrespectful wife; and a worse up-bringing than that what child could ever have? But Joshua's nameless mother—judging her from her son, she must have been a true mother in Israel. And she had already her full wages paid her when she saw her son Joshua standing of his own accord before Moses and serving him as his minister. And if she lived to see him at the head of the tribes of Israel, and leading them on from victory to victory, she would feel herself to have been far more than overpaid for all the watchfulness, and all the care, and all the nights of prayer she had laid out on her noble boy. And thus it came about that through her, and through some other nameless mothers like her, what Moses missed so much at home he found so thankfully as often as he went abroad, when Joshua and his companions gathered round Moses to drink in his counsels and to execute his commands. But it was Joshua alone in all the camp who was all to Moses that John was to Jesus. Moses loved and trusted Joshua, and Joshua lay at Moses' feet. At the same time, the defect of Joshua's finest quality, as we are wont to call it, came out on an occasion, and was warmly and nobly rebuked by Moses, as we read in a very beautiful passage in the Book of Numbers. There was a day of Pentecost in Israel as Moses grew old, when the Spirit of the Lord fell on seventy of the elders of Israel in order to fit them to be Moses' assessors and assistants in ruling and in teaching the refractory people. And, as God would have it,

over and above the selected seventy, there were two exceptional men on whom the Spirit fell also, till Joshua grudged and fretted at the way the people's eyes were drawn off his master and turned to Eldad and Medad as they prophesied in the camp. 'Forbid them, my lord!' said Joshua, in his jealousy for Moses. To which speech of Joshua Moses made the golden answer: 'Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!' See John iii. 26, the margin steps in and says. And when we turn to John's gospel we find this fine parallel passage: 'A man can receive nothing,' said the Baptist, 'except it be given from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ. The Christ must increase, but I must decrease.' It is beautiful to see Moses' best disciple so jealous of other gifted men, and all out of pure honour and love to his great master; and it is beautiful to see the same mistaken loyalty in John's disciples. But both Moses and John shine splendidly to all time in their rebukes to their disciples, and show themselves to be the true masters of such deserving disciples in their never-to-be-forgotten answers and lessons and reproofs. Moses, and John, and Paedaritus of Sparta, Moses' contemporary, who, when he was passed over and left out in the election of the Three Hundred, went home to his house beaming with happiness, it did him so much good to see that there were so many men in Sparta who were better men than himself.

For years and years, and all the time wholly

unknown to anybody but himself, Moses had been schooling his own heart till the case of Eldad and Medad only called out into words what had for long been in his thoughts. Joshua had but put in rude and angry words the bitter jealousy that Moses had for years and years been battling with in secret. And Moses' magnificent answer to Joshua was but another proof of the incomparable meekness and sweetness of Moses' so subdued heart. And then, when long afterwards we find Moses suing for a successor who should take up his work and finish it, he does it in a way that proclaims Moses to have been a man after God's own heart long before David was born. 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.' Noble soul! Great servant and great saint of God! Though his eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated, yet because it was made clear to him that it was the will of God, and that the time had now come when he was to stand aside and give up his place to another man, he put off his harness and his honour without one murmur. The cross would, no doubt, have been somewhat less sharp had Gershom or Eliezer stood ready to take up the laid-down leadership, and it may well have been the last pang of that painful time to Moses that he had no son of his own to take his place, to finish his work, and to transmit his name. Aaron, the high priest, under a like bereavement, held his

peace. And so did his desolate brother, the great law-giver and leader of Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of Israel may be obedient. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him. 'A man in whom is the Spirit,' said the Lord, who gave to Joshua that great gift. The Spirit of the Lord had begun in Joshua from a child, from his mother's milk, indeed; and to him that hath shall be given, till by the time that Moses died we are reassured and rewarded as we read that Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

It is a great epoch to a nation and to a church, as well as a great testing time to all concerned, when an old leader has to put off his harness, and when a new and an untried man is summoned up to put on his harness for all the toils and crosses that await him. I was present once at such an impressive moment, and I often remember it. An old servant of God who had been a very Moses to multitudes in our land was about to die when he sent for the man who had been a very Joshua, a son and a servant to him, and from his death-bed addressed him in words of love and trust and prophetic assurance that must often come back to his heart, as they often come back to mine. And then the old leader put his arms round his successor's neck and kissed him, and lay down and died. Men like Moses and

Joshua, and all who serve God and man, pass through extreme and painful experiences. The time had been when Caleb and Joshua stood absolutely alone with their life in their hand as all Israel bade stone them with stones. But never, all his days, was Joshua more or better the servant of God, and the best and the most far-seeing friend of the people of Israel, than he was just at that solitary, slanderous, murderous moment.

Just when Joshua was in the act of putting on his armour to attempt his first battle, he looked up, and, behold! a man stood over-against him with his sword drawn in his hand. 'Art thou for us?' demanded Joshua of the armed man; 'or art thou for our adversaries?' 'Nay,' answered the mysterious soldier, 'but as Captain of the Lord's host am I come.' And Joshua fell on his face, and said, 'What saith my Lord unto His servant?' And on the seventh day Jericho fell into Joshua's hands without sword or spear of Joshua.

Fell flat every stone wall of it before a blast of rams' horns only blown over Jericho in the name of the Lord. And Joshua from that day learned how to enter on the wars of the Lord in a way he never forgot. David, also, while yet a ruddy youth, had read the Book of Joshua in the intervals of feeding his father's flock. For we hear him as he puts off Saul's helmet of brass and coat of mail and takes five smooth stones out of the brook. Turning to Goliath, David said, 'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the

Lord of hosts. For to-day all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.' And all down sacred history, through Israel, and not less through England and Scotland, there have never failed prophets to preach how to war a good warfare, nor has the Lord's hosts lacked leaders like Joshua, who fell at that Divine Captain's feet and worshipped. Theodor Keim, in his volume of genius on our Lord's early life on earth, says that in His choice of a trade, which He was bound to choose, though He chose to be a carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth might have chosen anything else, anything but to be a soldier. But, surely, He was a soldier before Jericho, when He said to Joshua that He had come to him as Captain of the Lord's host. And we see Him in the thick and at the head of many a bloody battle all down the ages, till at last we are let see Him clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. But we are not all soldiers, and we civilians have this same Divine Man as our forerunner and example as well as soldiers. For, in the manifold wisdom and abounding grace of God, the Son of God appears to each one of us as we enter life, and summons us to put the shoes off our feet as we stand on that holy ground. To the young soldier He appears in vision as a captain, to the young preacher He appears as a preacher, to the young pastor He is the chief shepherd, to the young merchant He is an example of

successful buying and selling, to a master He appears as a master, and to a servant as a servant; sometimes He is a lover, sometimes He is a husband, sometimes a son, and sometimes a brother, and so on, till He never leaves any man at his entrance on life without a divine vision, and an ideal example, and a sacred summons to take his shoes off his feet. And all young men who, like Joshua, make their start on this holy ground,—they shall surely finish their course and keep the faith till the Captain of their salvation shall not be ashamed to call them His brethren. Loose thy shoes from off thy feet. And Joshua did so.

With all his clearness of head and with all his honesty of heart, Joshua made one great mistake in the opening of his military and diplomatic life. That great mistake arose out of his youth and inexperience, and he is not much to be blamed—by us, at any rate—for making that mistake. All the same, that mistake, once made, was disastrous and irretrievable. The Gibeonites were terrified to death at the approach of Joshua and his army. And they made as if they were come to him from a far country, a country that he would never have commission or interest to conquer, but with whose people it would be to his advantage in many ways to be good friends and in a league of peace. And their old shoes, and old bottles, and old bread, and their wily speeches, and other fine fetches completely circumvented Joshua, till he made a covenant of peace with a cruel, corrupt, and accursed people that he had been armed and ordained and com-

manded to sweep off the face of the earth. And for this, and for other like mistakes of ignorance, and simplicity, and over-leniency, both Joshua and all Israel suffered long and bitterly. The mystical interpretation here tells us that pride was the sin of the Amorite, and envy the sin of the Hittite, and wrath of the Perizzite, and gluttony and lechery of the Girgashite and the Hivite, while covetousness and sloth were the corruptions of the Canaanite and the Jebusite. And then that same method of interpretation passes on to this, that many young men when they first enter on their inexperience of sanctification are cheated into sparing some of their pride under this disguise, and some of their envy under that. Gluttony and lust also come to them each under its own cloak of deceit, and covetousness and sloth also each under its own mask, till all their days many men are tempted and led into this and that besetting sin through early ignorance and simplicity and self-will. Still, just as Joshua put the Gibeonites to hew wood and draw water for the altar of the Lord when he could not root them out, so we may turn the remnants of our pride, and envy, and ill-will, and gluttony, and sloth to this same good use. These things will try us and will prove us, as the Scripture says, to see what is in our hearts, and whether we will serve God in spite of them or not. It was the thorn that was in the apostle's flesh that brought down this word to him: 'My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in weakness.' And the children of the Gibeonites, while thorns in their eyes and scourges in

their sides, and snares and traps to them, were at the same time hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord to this day, in the place which the Lord shall choose.

Joshua never ceased all his life long to mourn over the great mistake he had made at Gilgal. He could not shut his eyes a single day to the disastrous results of that great mistake to himself and to all Israel. And when he was on his death-bed it all came back to him, till he summoned the heads of Israel around him to hear his dying apology and protest; 'Choose you out this day among all the gods of the Gibeonites and the other Canaanites the god that you and your children will serve; but know this, that as for me and my house we will serve THE LORD.' You all know, I suppose, what that meant on Joshua's dying lips that day. Joshua had never forgotten that day of days in the great days of his youth, when Moses took his young servant up with him to the top of the mount, ay, and even into the cleft rock itself.

From that awful day never a day, never a night, never an hour of a day or a night, had passed over Joshua that he had not heard the Lord passing by and proclaiming, THE LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. Ever since that day on the mount and in the cleft rock the LORD, and no heathen god of them all, had been Joshua's God. Happy

man who had such a revelation made to him in the days of his youth! Happy man, who could call all Israel to come and see that he was leaving a house behind him of the same experience, of the same fixed mind, and of the same assured and inherited happiness. Young men, still choosing whom and what you will serve; young fathers and young mothers, still choosing a God for yourselves and for your household,—Joshua speaks to you out of his noble life, so nobly begun and now so nobly ended. Choose and say. Are you yourselves to be, and are you to bring up your children after you to be, Amorites, and Hittites, and Hivites, and Canaanites, and Jebusites in the land? Are you to let ambition, and envy, and pride, and anger, and self-will rule in your hearts and be your household gods? No! Never, never! Not so long as you have still this day in your choice for yourselves and for your households the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, and abundant in goodness and truth. And Moses and Joshua made haste in the cleft rock, and they bowed their heads to the earth, and they said, If now we have found grace in Thy sight, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance. And from that day it was so.

XXVI

ACHAN

ACHAN OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH WAS TAKEN

JERICHO was one of the largest and richest cities in all ancient Canaan. But for the terrible ban pronounced by Joshua, Jericho might have taken the place of Jerusalem itself as the chief city of ancient Israel. Jericho was an excellently situated and a strongly fenced city. Broad and lofty walls ran all round the city, and the only way in and out of the city was by great gates which were scrupulously shut every night at sundown. There were great foundries of brass and iron in Jericho, with workshops also in silver and in gold. The looms of Babylonia were already famous over all the eastern world, and their rich and beautiful textures went far and near, and were warmly welcomed wherever the commercial caravans of that day carried them. Balak's gold had long before now brought Balaam the soothsayer across the plains of Mesopotamia, and the gold and silver of Jericho had also drawn toward that city the travelling dealers in the woven work of the Babylonian looms. A goodly Babylonish

garment plays a prominent part in the tragical history that now opens before us.

The rich and licentious city of Jericho was doomed of God to swift overthrow and absolute extermination, but no part of the spoil, neither thread nor shoe-latchet, was to be so much as touched by Joshua or any of his armed men. Nothing demoralises an army like sacking a fallen city. To spring like a tiger at a wall that reaches up to heaven, and then to extinguish all a tiger's thirst for blood and plunder, that is the high ideal of a true soldier's duty. And it is a splendid certificate to Joshua's discipline, and to the morality of his army, that only one of his men gave way in the time of temptation. And the swift and heavy fall of Joshua's hand on that one man must have still more consolidated Joshua's authority, and transformed his wilderness hosts into true soldiers, where other soldiers would have been thieves and robbers. The army of Israel crossed the Jordan, entered the devoted land, besieged its cities, and marched from victory to victory under the banners of their respective tribes; very much as a modern army is made up of companies of men compacted together under the colours and the denominations of their respective clans and nationalities. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel had its own regiment, as we would say, marching and camping and entering battle under its own ensign; and thus it was that when the armies of Israel marched round Jericho on the way to their miraculous conquest of that city the standard of the tribe of Judah led the sacred host.

Every single soldier in all Israel had heard Joshua's proclamation about Jericho; both what his men were to do till the walls fell, and how they were to demean themselves after the city had been given of God into their hands. But war is war; and the best of commanders cannot make war a silken work, nor can he hold down the devil in the hearts of all his men. In the hearts of many of them he may, if he first does that in his own heart; but scarcely in the hearts of them all. Night fell on the prostrate city, and the hour of temptation struck for Joshua and all his men. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life. And Joshua and all his men received the crown of life that night,—all his men but one. Who is that stealing about among the smoking ruins? Is that some soldier of Jericho who has saved himself from the devouring sword? When the night wind wakens the embers again these are the accoutrements and the movements of one of Joshua's men. Has he lost his way? Has he been half dead, and has he not heard the rally of the trumpet? He hides, he listens, he looks through the darkness, he disappears into the darkness. No one has slept for joy in all the camp of Israel that night. And no one has slept for sorrow in one of Judah's tents that night. For, what is the fall of Jericho to them in that tent when it has cost them the life of their husband, their father, and their master? When the door of that tent is suddenly lifted, and the face of a corpse comes in, takes a spade, and buries a strange burden in the earth in

the midst of the astounded tent. God giveth His beloved sleep. But—

> Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more!
> Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep!
> And still it cried, Macbeth doth murder sleep!

So the Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout the whole country. But the men of Israel fled before the men of Ai, wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water. And the Lord said to Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Up, sanctify the people, for there is an accursed thing in the midst of them. And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken; and he brought the family of Judah, and he took the family of Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites, man by man, and Zabdi was taken; and he brought his household, man by man, and Achan of the tribe of Judah was taken. My son, said Joshua, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him; and tell me what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. And all Israel raised over

him a great heap of stones to this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Achor unto this day.

Everybody who reads the best books will have long had by heart Thomas à Kempis's famous description of the successive steps of a successful temptation. There is first the bare thought of the sin. Then, upon that, there is a picture of the sin formed and hung up on the secret screen of the imagination. A strange sweetness from that picture is then let down drop by drop into the heart; and then that secret sweetness soon secures the consent of the whole soul, and the thing is done. That is true, and it is powerful enough. But Achan's confession to Joshua is much simpler, and much closer to the truth. 'I saw the goodly Babylonish garment, I coveted it, I took it, and I hid it in my tent.' Had Joshua happened to post the ensign of Judah opposite the poor men's part of the city, this sad story would never have been told. But even as it was, had Achan only happened to stand a little to the one side, or a little to the other side of where he did stand, in that case he would not have seen that beautiful piece, and not seeing it he would not have coveted it, and would have gone home to his tent that night a good soldier and an honest man. But when once Achan's eyes lighted on that rich garment he never could get his eyes off it again. As À Kempis says, the seductive thing got into Achan's imagination, and the devil's work was done. Achan was in a fever

now lest he should lose that goodly garment. He was terrified lest any of his companions should have seen that glittering piece. He was sure some of them had seen it and were making off with it. He stood in between it and the searchers. He turned their attention to something else. And then when their backs were about he wrapped it up in a hurry, and the gold and the silver inside of it, and thrust it down into a hiding-place. His eyes were Achan's fatal snare. It was his eyes that stoned Achan and burned him and his household to dust and ashes in the Valley of Achor. Had God seen it to be good to make men and women in some way without eyes, the fall itself would have been escaped. It was at Adam and Eve's eyes that the devil came into man's heart at first. In his despair to get the devil out of his heart Job swore a solemn oath and made a holy covenant with his eyes. But our Saviour, as He always does, goes far deeper than Job. He knows quite well that no oath that Job ever swore, and no covenant that Job ever sealed, will hold any man's eyes from sin; and therefore He demands of all His disciples that their eyes shall be plucked out. He pulls down His own best handiwork at its finest part so that He may get the devil's handiwork destroyed and rooted out of it; and then He will let us have all our eyes back again when and where we are fit to be trusted with eyes. It is better to go to heaven like a blind man led by a dog, says our Lord; ten times better than to dance all your days down to hell with Babylonian bangles on and all ornaments. Miss Rossetti is writing to

young ladies, it is true; but what she says to them it will do us all good to hear. 'True,' says that fine writer, 'all our lives long we shall be bound to refrain our soul, and to keep it low; but what then? For the books we now forbear to read, we shall one day be endued with wisdom and knowledge. For the music we will not listen to we shall join in the song of the redeemed. For the pictures from which we turn we shall gaze unabashed on the Beatific Vision. For the companionships we shun, we shall be welcomed into angelic society and the communion of triumphant saints. For all the amusements we avoid, we shall keep the supreme jubilee.' Yes, it is as certain as God's truth and righteousness are certain, that the mortified man who goes about with his eyes out; the man who steals along the street seeing neither smile nor frown; he who keeps his eyes down wherever men and women congregate, —in the church, in the market-place, at a railway-station, on a ship's deck, at an inn table,—where you will; that man escapes multitudes of temptations that more open and more full-eyed men and women continually fall before. You huff and toss your head at that. But these things are not spoken for you, but for those who have sold and cut off both eye and ear and hand and foot and life itself, if all that will only carry them one single step nearer to their salvation.

So Joshua rose early in the morning,—Joshua, like every good soldier, was an early riser,—and he brought all Israel by their tribes, and their families, and their households, that the Lord Himself might

make inquisition, and might put His finger upon the marked man. Look at the camp of Israel that awful morning! It is the day of judgment, and the great white throne is set in the Valley of Achor before its proper time. Look how the hearts of those fathers and mothers who have sons in the army beat as if it were the last trump! Did you ever spend a night like that in Achan's tent? A friend of mine once slept in a room in a hotel in Glasgow through the wall from a man who made him think sometimes that a madman had got into the house. Sometimes he thought it must be a suicide, and sometimes a damned soul come back for a visit to the city of its sins. But he understood the mysterious noises of the night next morning when the officers came in and beckoned to a gentleman who sat surrounded by the luxuries of the breakfast table, and drove him off to a penal settlement. Groanings that cannot be uttered to you were heard by all Achan's neighbours all that night. Till one bold man rose and lifted a loop of Achan's tent in the darkness, and saw Achan still burying deeper and deeper his sin. O sons and daughters of discovered Achan! O guilty and dissembling sinners! It is all in vain. It is all utterly and absolutely in vain. Be sure as God is in heaven, that He has His eyes upon you, and that your sin will find you out. You think that the darkness will cover you. Wait till you see! Go on sowing as you have begun, and come and tell us when the harvest is reaped how it threshes out and how it tastes.

The eagle that stole a piece of sacred flesh from the altar brought home a smouldering coal with it that kindled up afterwards and burned up both her whole nest and all her young ones. It was very sore upon Achan's sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had. But things are as they are. God gathers the solitary into families for good, and the family tie still continues to hold even when all the members of the family have done evil. Once a father, always a father: the relationship stands. Once a son, always a son, even when a prodigal son. Every son has his father's grey hairs and his mother's anxious heart in his hands, and no possible power can alter that. Drop that stolen flesh! There is a coal in it that shall never be quenched.

Achan, after all, as is sometimes the case, had all the time the root of the matter in him. Achan made a clean breast of it, and gave himself up to Joshua before all Israel, and walked out to the Valley of Achor without a murmur. But Joshua had no choice. Joshua could not help himself. Joshua was a man under authority. And Achan had to die. But the point and the proper end of the whole story to us is this: that a greater than Joshua is here. Joshua bore a Name greater than his own, but that only brings out all the better the blessed contrast between Achan and you. Make a clean breast of it, then. Go home to your tent to-night, take up the accursed thing out of its hiding-place, and lay it out before Joshua, if not before all Israel. Lay it out and

say,—Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. And if you do not know what more to say, if you are speechless beside that accursed thing, try this; say this. Ask and say, Is thy Name indeed Jesus? Dost thou indeed save found-out men from their sins? Art thou still set forth to be a propitiation? Art thou truly able to save to the uttermost? For I am the chief of sinners, say. Lie down on the floor of your room,—you need not think it too much for you to do that, or that it is an act unworthy of your manhood to do it; the Son of God did it for you on the floor of Gethsemane. Yes, lie down on the floor of your room, lay your head in the dust of it, and say this about yourself: Say that you, naming yourself, are the offscouring of all men. For thus and thus, naming it, have I done. And then say this,—

> The dying thief rejoiced to see
> That Fountain in his day—

and see what the true Joshua will stand over you and will say to you.

Therefore the name of that place is called The Valley of Achor to this day. Achor, that is, as it is interpreted on the margin, trouble; the Valley of Trouble. Why hast thou troubled us? demanded Joshua of Achan. The Lord shall trouble thee this day. The Lord troubled Achan in judgment that day, but He is troubling you in mercy in your day. Yes; be sure, in mercy. If I were suddenly to open your door to-night, and find you on your

face, I would clap my hands with gladness. I would lie down on the spot beside you, and would share your trouble, and you would share mine, and I would lift you up and share your joy. It is not possible, you say. Look at your Bible again, and see. 'And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for the people that have sought Me.' And, again,—'And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the day of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.' Your soul, that is. Your soul shall sing there. There, in that Valley of Achor. There in that room. There where your sin found you out. There where I found you on your face. Yes; already your trouble is a door of hope. You will sing yet as you never sang in the days of your youth. You never sang songs like these in the days of your youth, or before your trouble came,—songs like these: The Lord will be a refuge for the overwhelmed: a refuge in the time of trouble. Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Though I walk in the midst of trouble Thou wilt revive me, and Thy right hand shall save me. O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble!

You will sing that song in your Valley of Achor till this song shall be taken up over you by saints and angels,—These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.